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MRS FITZHERBERT'S secret marriage to King George IV when he was Prince of Wales, and their unconcealed association for many happy years together, is one of the most famous romances of history.

A hundred years have passed since her death, but no adequate life of her has been hitherto published owing to the difficulty of collecting materials and obtaining permission for their publication. the old Catholic aristocracy, and of her previous marriages to Mr Weld of Lulworth and Captain Fitzherbert, whose deaths left her a widow for the second time in her early twenties.

Many private papers concerning her life with the Prince have been preserved among the family archives of Mr Shane Leslie, who descended from her adopted daughter. Years of devoted research in many family archives has rewarded his investigations with unexpected and abundant success. The most extensive finds were among the

Portarlington and Seymour papers, and by gracious permission of His Majesty he has not only been given full access to the Windsor Archives but permission to publish new documents and letters of the greatest interest from them. As a Catholic she and the Prince could not marry without incurring the utmost legal penalties, besides forfeiting his succession to the throne. Yet he insisted on the secret marriage which the Catholic Church could not refuse and actually confirmed, as this was the only relationship that her conscience would allow.

The letters, which cover a very wide field and come from many royal or celebrated persons, throw a flood of light on the social life of the time. They show how strictly the Prince of Wales insisted that absolute social precedence must always be given to Mrs Fitzherbert, although he could never acknowledge that they were married.

Mr Leslie discloses the full details of the secret marriage, of the Prince's will and of her will, and many documents which throw new light on the whole story. He gives a full account of her upbringing in the sheltered seclusion of

Her charm and gaiety, her piety and absolute integrity as a Catholic, and the noble dignity of her character, are clearly shown in the admirable biography which Mr Leslie has written with his practised skill.



Mrs Fitzherbert



*Note to Frontispiece:*

### THE DREAM OF MRS FITZHERBERT

THE reconciliation of Mrs Fitzherbert with the Prince of Wales after the semi-authorised denial of her marriage in the House of Commons inspired a picture which remains a puzzle to the experts. It is attributed to Gainsborough, but at most only parts could be possibly traced to his brush.

The Prince is shewn bestarred and pleading with Mrs Fitzherbert in a boat, but she sits with eyes averted and turning towards Sheridan, who no doubt is giving her the advice the Prince would most wish. A jewelled cross suspended from her neck indicates the religious nature of her feelings, while celestial creatures stretch their arms in the direction of her large picture-hat. Sheridan is supported by the first Mrs Sheridan, the beautiful Miss Linley, while Miss Stephens, the singer, engages in parley with the second Earl of Radnor, other figures appearing in the background.

Reconciliation has been achieved, for an angelic being lifts her wand in the heavens and a celestial host appear satisfied with what is passing on earth. Is it a wild phantasy, or does it represent an actual water-party glimpsed by some unknown artist?

The history of the picture is also a mystery. It belonged to Lord Melbourne, the Prime Minister, and was by him presented to Mrs Norton, with whom he was in love, apparently because she was a granddaughter of Sheridan. She left it at Frampton Court, the home of the Sheridans, in pledge for a loan of two thousand pounds which she was unable to repay. It passed amongst the Sheridan heirlooms.

*(Reproduced by permission of Mrs Clare Sheridan.)*





# MRS FITZHERBERT

## *A Life*

*chiefly from unpublished sources*

by SHANE LESLIE

*"We talked of her life being written. She said she supposed it would some time or other but with thousands of lies; but she would be dead and it would not signify. I urged her to write it herself but she said it would break her heart."*

MRS CREEVEY (reporting Mrs Fitzherbert in 1805)

*"What you and the whole world must be acquainted with when I am no more."*

THE PRINCE OF WALES TO  
MRS FITZHERBERT  
(December 11, 1799)

1939

LONDON: BURNS OATES

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MADE AND PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN  
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THIS BOOK IS  
DEDICATED TO THE HONOURABLE  
MRS FITZHERBERT OF SWYNNERTON  
AND HER TWO SONS  
BASIL FRANCIS FITZHERBERT  
AND  
EVELYN THOMAS FITZHERBERT



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## PRELUDE

A COMPLETED Life of Mrs Fitzherbert is long overdue and for many reasons the present volume is very incomplete. It has necessarily developed into a collection of materials for such a Life rather than a series of Regency tableaux or an artistic and fanciful presentation.

Modern Biography tends to brilliant selection and unfair suggestion. Well gleaned and but slightly sifted materials form the safest security for the reputation of both the historian and the subject of his history.

A full Life would have been written long ago, had not so many obstacles met biographers. And who would not have leaped in those days to be the biographer, had all the wonderful material been available? To Mrs Creevey Mrs Fitzherbert once confided that she supposed her Life would one day be written, but that it would be full of lies and, as she would be dead, it would not matter!

Huish, the historian of George IV, and Tom Moore, the biographer of Sheridan, would have kindled to the task, and every Regency chronicler since these days, "Lewis Melville" or Percy Fitzgerald. Sir Herbert Maxwell, who landed a great plum in the *Creevey Papers*, would have made a Life of Mrs Fitzherbert his masterpiece, had he been allowed the documents.

But after all the precautions taken to destroy letters and abscond papers, it is almost a miracle for any Biography to be possible. Research for material leads the gleaner from bonfire to bonfire. At times it has seemed useless to proceed. If it was really so important to so many important people that Mrs Fitz-

## Prelude

herbert should be completely forgotten with all her mysteries and troubles, perhaps it was better so, and it would not have disheartened so many biographers, most of whom abandoned the idea or made her Life a mere chapter or two in the Life of the King and Prince Regent.

The most important correspondences have been gutted. Others have been ransacked and censored. Even note-books have been scissored. Every effort was made to suppress a secret which everybody suspected then and has known since: that Mrs Fitzherbert was really married to the King!

There have been two schools of intention towards Mrs Fitzherbert's memory: those who have wished, like the Duke of Wellington, to sink her records and her reputation without leaving a trace, and those who, like her Catholic relations, have determined to set forth her character and position without doubt and without stint.

Her name refused to disappear from books of Memoirs and, as long as there were unpublished papers sealed in Coutts' Bank, there was a tempting bait to attract that race of men who make fame by reviving the fame of others. But the *Fitzherbert Papers* lay in Coutts' Bank behind the Torres Vedras of the great Duke's seal and signature. The Legatees and Executors of Mrs Fitzherbert showed themselves dumb. No Papers had passed to the Fitzherbert family, who with other Catholic connections were alone anxious that something should be written on Mrs Fitzherbert's behalf.

And the years passed.

Yet it was not possible to leave Mrs Fitzherbert's name in entire oblivion nor for her honour to rest in corruption. No Memoir or Letters or Biography of the last decades of the eighteenth century or of the Regency but dropped some allusion or hint or query.

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Some of the scribbled shots went perfectly near the truth, but there were plenty of the lies which poor Mrs Fitzherbert had prophesied.

Most of the memories were as charming as her unprotected gentleness in life and death deserved. But there were mentions which were less so. The word "mistress," which is so sweet on the lips of lovers, is less affecting under the recording pen. No woman of her time made greater efforts to avoid coming under the term. In fact her struggles on the side of respectability outraged a public, upset a political party, and all but imperilled the Throne!

In spite of all her private pains and attempted securities her name was left in the dust of doubt and sometimes in a proximity that was muddy. It was quite right to class her beauty with Georgiana Duchess of Devonshire, but fallacious to throw her between "Perdita" and Lady Jersey in the glittering love-list of George Prince of Wales. He was an exquisite chooser, but Princess Caroline he did not choose.

And the years passed.

A generation later Queen Victoria expressed her wish that Mrs Fitzherbert's Papers should be continued in discreet custody. Her Majesty was rumoured to have shown anxiety concerning other Papers "which no loyal subject should wish to possess." Possibly she had read the pretty antithesis made between herself and Mrs Fitzherbert by Sir Archibald Alison in his *History of England*. He had pointed out that under other circumstances the lady, who had died a few weeks before the opening of the Victorian Era, might herself have sat upon the Throne. Was it possible that she could have been in any way married to a King of England? Were there documents? Her Majesty received full information on that point from the loyal House of Seymour. . . .

And the years passed into a new century.

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But not without literary defence made on a small scale by her Catholic connections. In 1856 the Hon. Charles Langdale published:

“Memoirs of Mrs Fitzherbert: with an account of her marriage with H.R.H. the Prince of Wales, afterwards King George the Fourth.”<sup>1</sup>

Five hundred copies were printed and, as it has not been reprinted, it has become a scarce book. It was a confused production, but it contained an invaluable fragment of Autobiography, which Mrs Fitzherbert had dictated herself to Mr Langdale’s uncle, Lord Stourton.

None dared gainsay the book, though none were able to confirm it with the proof of document. So the book stood.

Fifty years later William H. Wilkins published two volumes entitled:

“Mrs Fitzherbert and George IV with Illustrations.”<sup>2</sup>

Before it went out of print in 1910, four thousand copies had been printed. There was later a single-volume edition of eight hundred, and the book was reprinted in America. By this work Mrs Fitzherbert’s name was made secure.

It was richly adorned both with documents and pictures. Generations had passed indeed, for it was dedicated “To the Lady Constance Leslie, youngest daughter of Mrs Fitzherbert’s adopted daughter.” Two and three generations had passed away and there was only one human being left who had actually spoken to Mrs Fitzherbert and slept under her roof at Brighton, Lady Blanche Haygarth, another daughter of Minney Seymour, the adopted darling of Mrs Fitzherbert’s love.

Mr Wilkins’ handsome volumes have also passed

<sup>1</sup> *Richard Bentley,*

<sup>2</sup> *Longmans, Green.*

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out of print. They covered fresh ground, but the Centenary of Mrs Fitzherbert's death in 1937 called for a reprinting of the information contained in Langdale and Wilkins, as well as for a search into all possible Archives.

The pith of Langdale's book has been taken into the present volume, while every use has been made of Mr Wilkins' work with the permission of his relatives.

Mr Wilkins was in poor health, but he succeeded in finishing the book before his lamented death in 1906. Comparison with many of the original letters shows that he was unduly hurried at the end. Mrs Fitzherbert had been chiefly pictured by caricatures, but Mr Wilkins' volumes portrayed her by portraits and miniatures in which Art may be said to have come to the rescue of Beauty.

Few women have been more caricatured or satirised in England than Mrs Fitzherbert. Her defenders have been consequently indignant and outspoken. A common badge of chivalry unites the work of Lord Stourton, Mr Langdale, and Mr Wilkins.

There are considerable gaps. Of Mrs Fitzherbert's youth in Shropshire, of her education in Paris, and of her first two marriages only shreds of information survive. Following her marriage to the Prince, when she became the chief subject of London gossip, there are only flashes from the pinnacles. She was mentioned in endless Diaries and Letters but superficially. Her later domestic and private life can only be gleaned from the correspondences of Minney Seymour. Of her charitable and spiritual life there is little record save a few letters written after her death by her chaplains. Betwixt moments of self-sought obscurity she passed into moments of most brilliant limelight. But for biographers much of the background remained darkened.

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Two great correspondences were destroyed in her lifetime. The Duke of Wellington as executor of George IV returned her letters in return for the King's and all were burnt in her house in Tilney Street save the small handful which she deposited in Coutts' Bank. These appear fully for the first time. The son of Lord Albemarle, who assisted at this holocaust, wrote: "Some idea of the mass of manuscripts committed to the flames may be formed by an expression of the Duke to my father after several hours burning: I think, my Lord, we had better hold our hand for a while or we shall set the old woman's chimney on fire."<sup>1</sup>

This was grievous enough, but as these letters contained chiefly the expression of the Prince's passion and Mrs Fitzherbert's letters of response, it can be understood how important it was to the Duke, representing the Crown, to bury all traces of what seemed to him a great scandal of illegality. The future Biographer found himself writing the *Life of Héloïse* without her correspondence with Abélard.

The letters of Mrs Jordan conveyed no difficulties to the Crown or to her lover's<sup>2</sup> succession, but in Mrs Fitzherbert's case serious account had to be taken. She had crossed the Sanctuary with her lover. For dynastic reasons her letters might become dynamic.

"Oh, dear, oh, dear," sighed Creevey, "that I could not have seen them. They began in 1785 and lasted to 1806, one and twenty years. The last year was when the young man fell in love with Lady Hertford and used to cry as I have often seen him in Mrs Fitzherbert's presence."

Historically there was a correspondence even more interesting. Of her letters to the Duke of York she assured Lord Stourton "that when Sir Herbert Taylor

<sup>1</sup> *Fifty Years of My Life*: George Earl of Albemarle.

<sup>2</sup> The Duke of Clarence: William IV.

## Prelude

gave her up her own correspondence, she was for two years employed in the perusal and burning of these most interesting letters. . . . She added that she could have given the best private and public history of all the transactions of the country from the close of the American War down to the death of the Duke of York."<sup>1</sup>

This was a loss to History as well as to Biography. Fifty years passed before Mr Wilkins produced his work. For ten years he had devoted himself to the tragedies and sorrows of ladies connected with the House of Hanover. He had written *The Love of an Uncrowned Queen* and *A Queen of Tears*. The *Injured Caroline of Brunswick* might have rounded the tragic list, but he was suddenly attracted by the mystery of Mrs Fitzherbert. Deterred at first by the scantiness of materials, he was encouraged by the descendants of Mrs Fitzherbert's connections and Legatees. Pictures and relics there were, but of fresh papers very little except letters written to Minney Seymour, which were made available on conditions. No caricatures were to be used, and the question of Mrs Fitzherbert's children was to be considered closed.

Mr Wilkins' task was made memorable by the opening of the documents in Coutts' Bank, some from which he was permitted by King Edward VII to publish.

Research has since been extended and all the documents from Coutts' Bank have been examined and copied.

The present volume has been based on a number of other collections as well. Mrs Fitzherbert's surviving papers passed to Minney Seymour and through her to her son, the fourth Earl of Portarlington.

The *Portarlington Papers* were kept at Emo Park

<sup>1</sup> 1812-1827.



## Prelude

in County Carlow except one box, which remained at Glaslough in County Monaghan. Another important collection belongs to Lord Esher. The different hoards are referred to as follows in this book :

The documents at Windsor: *Fitzherbert Papers*, I.

Lord Esher's collection: *Fitzherbert Papers*, II.

The Papers at Glaslough: *Fitzherbert Papers*, III.

The *Portarlington Papers* were housed in Dublin after the sale of Emo, and fortunately escaped the perils of their surroundings before being examined by the writer in London, by kind permission of the present and sixth Earl.

The three tin boxes contained amongst a mass of family papers a great many Letters written by Mrs Fitzherbert to Minney and George Dawson-Damer. One of the boxes bore this note :

"The contents of this box arranged and catalogued by Constance Leslie at Seymour Damer's request (December 17, 1869). They contain papers of the greatest family interest all worth keeping, relating to Mrs Fitzherbert, Col and Mrs Damer ; Will of Mrs Fitzherbert. Interesting *letters from Wm Pitt, C. J. Fox, R. B. Sheridan, Edm Burke* (in little portfolio) relating to Prince of Wales' affairs. *Letter from Bishop of Winchester to Mrs Fitzherbert on Miss Seymour's Religious Education*. Letters from Lord Albemarle on Mrs Fitzherbert's affairs. Letters from Lord Alvanley to Col Damer respecting money affairs, his duel with O'Connell in which Col Damer was his second, and to the De Ros affair. Napoleon's gloves."<sup>1</sup>

Another box contained the love-letters which passed during six years between Minney and George Dawson-Damer. As their marriage was much opposed by Mrs Fitzherbert, the references to her are numerous and cover a period in her life otherwise unillustrated (1819-1825).

<sup>1</sup> The items in italics have disappeared (1938).

## Prelude

The Papers at Glaslough included the letters of the Duke of Kent to Mrs Fitzherbert, the letters of George FitzClarence, afterwards Earl of Munster, to Mrs Fitzherbert, and a number of letters from minor Royalty. They included a number of drafts of letters written by Mrs Fitzherbert to the Prince as Regent and represent the only survivors of her share in that correspondence. These papers were enclosed in a Box marked "Duchy of Cornwall" with the following history attached:

"These letters came accidentally into possession of Lady Leslie on death of an old servant of Col Damer whose widow sent them to her. The box was evidently once George the Fourth's, when Prince of Wales, and given by him to Mrs Fitzherbert. Her letters to and from Mary Seymour (Mrs Damer) are here and many interesting ones to the latter."

By permission of Lord Henry Seymour the writer was enabled to search the Archives at Ragley Hall, the seat of the Marquesses of Hertford. These were found to include all Mrs Fitzherbert's letters to Sir George Seymour, her executor. They were supplemented by his Diaries and Confidential Memoranda, many of which had bearing on Mrs Fitzherbert's affairs.

The *Ragley Papers* also contained the correspondence of the Prince of Wales with Lord Hugh Seymour, Minney Seymour's father, and later with the Seymour Family respecting Mrs Fitzherbert's adoption of Minney.

Sir George Seymour's notes often recorded letters which have disappeared, for instance:

"There were 23 letters from the Prince to Mrs Fitzherbert which I looked over March 31 1837 and left with the Duke of Wellington according to agreement between Mrs Fitzherbert and His Majesty's executors."

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Their fate at Apsley House can easily be imagined. Fortunately there were also some " extracts I made from the Prince of Wales' letters to Mrs Fitzherbert as indictative of his respect and attachment to her at two different epochs."

The writer has also had access to the *FitzClarence Papers*, thanks to the present Earl of Munster and to the *Chatsworth Papers*, thanks to the present Duke of Devonshire. His Grace's Librarian, Mr Francis Thompson, was able to indicate an interesting document which Mr Wilkins had supposed to exist at Devonshire House. It was the paper signed by Mrs Fitzherbert and Georgiana Duchess of Devonshire describing the mock-ceremony of marriage which took place at Carlton House on July 8, 1784.

The *Sheridan Papers* produced one letter of Mrs Fitzherbert and the *Jervis Papers* possessed one which is now missing, but of which the gist was remembered.

Lord Esher's collection proved to be most interesting as it contained all Mrs Fitzherbert's Letters to her other executor, Colonel Gurwood, together with letters of Miss Isabelle Pigot (her chaperon) and of Admiral Jack Payne (the go-between) to the Prince of Wales.

The *Fitzherbert Papers* at Windsor have been with most Gracious Permission re-examined and copied more fully than Mr Wilkins' transcripts. These famous documents need no longer be considered to harbour the least mystery. Every scrap is now known to historians. Mrs Fitzherbert's purposes have been fulfilled, little as she ever dreamed that they would eventually reach Royal custody. An intelligent consideration shows that the memories both of Mrs Fitzherbert and of " Mrs Fitzherbert's husband " will be enhanced by the full publication.

They show that George IV in his youth loved as he believed differently and more ardently than any

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other being in Creation and that he was willing to sacrifice all he possessed to meet the honourable scruples of the woman whom Destiny, and may we say Heaven, had clearly cast into his path? Mrs Fitzherbert's love was his best passport to Posterity.

It is impossible to set out Mrs Fitzherbert's character without finding good of George IV. In his latter years his character became atrophied and he fell foul of the Liberals and the Literati, who were merciless to his memory. He was no longer Mrs Fitzherbert's Prince Charming, but as Regent and King he made an industrious and not indecorous figurehead to the Empire. He never forgot nor failed his position. Of Thackeray's performance in *The Four Georges* the best that can be said is that the author had the decency to refuse its delivery as a lecture in the Pavilion and the abuse of a dead man in his own house. The Liberals resented the Iron Duke's appreciation when he said that the King "on every occasion displayed a degree of knowledge and of talent not often to be expected of a person holding his high office."

This was a direct contrast to Mrs Fitzherbert, for she seemed to old Creevey "the best-hearted and most discreet human being that ever was to be without a particle of talent." Otherwise she supplied almost everything that the Prince lacked, and he found in her his other and better self. Otherwise it is difficult to account for his misery and desolation when he found himself deprived of her in his days of official marriage.

The tide has begun to turn in favour of George IV. The Victorian criticised the Man without acknowledging the King. Respectability was abashed and Prudishness became demonstrative. Time cannot diminish his record. Windsor Castle he restored and adorned. The Waterloo Gallery, the Waterloo Vase: the Royal pictures and plate are his mark. He was the patron of painter and sculptor: of a Lawrence and a Canova.

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To him Scott and Jane Austen dedicated their masterpieces. The Library, which he gave the British people, was a gift which has been compared to the Library of the Ptolemies at Alexandria. Regent's Park, Regent Street, even the fantastic Pavilion at Brighton have remained. His bronze by Chantrey might well be reckoned as Brighton's founder. This was a King who was served by a Castlereagh, a Canning, a Wellington, and who appreciated in turn.

Let it be granted that his State-marriage was a farce and his life whether as a husband or father without praise. His amours were necessarily many, but they included the greatest Romance even in the annals of the susceptible House of Brunswick. A Romance to which Holy Church acceded.

Both lives, the Prince's and Mrs Fitzherbert's, reached their climax with the secret and daring marriage of December 15, 1785. Henceforth for woe or weal they were both influenced in a hundred ways. The course of each was radically altered and, even after they had parted, they were deeply affected by the step which they had taken, a step which once seemed beyond their power as human beings, but of which they courageously took the limitless consequences and all that followed with the blind consequences of Greek Tragedy.

Mrs Fitzherbert's Biography divides itself naturally into two parts. All the first part of her life leads up to the marriage with the Prince. The remainder of her life was the sequel of complications, excitements, and sorrows lasting until her death in 1837, when she wisely and significantly desired that no Hatchment should be exhibited at her funeral. The reason was obvious, for no College of Arms would have known how exactly to decide her Arms or her Title as a Widow of the late King George IV.

Burke's Peerage has not yet recorded her marriage

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to the King, although for many years a chivalrous footnote described her as "well-known and highly respected." We cannot make her more respected, but we have endeavoured to make her better known.

The Publishers desire to express their humble thanks, with the Author's no less, to His Majesty the King for a continuance of the privilege accorded by his late Majesty King Edward VII to the late Mr W. H. Wilkins of access to the *Fitzherbert Papers* preserved at Windsor Castle.

The Author begs to express his thanks to Mr Morshead, the Royal Librarian, for his great help and guidance in active research. And in different degrees to the following who have permitted access to papers in their possession :

The Dukes of Devonshire and Rutland.

The Earls of Portarlington and Munster.

The Lord Stafford.

The Late Lord Henry Seymour.

Mrs David Loch.

Miss Jervis of Meaford.

Mr Henry Roberts, the Historian of the Pavilion.

The Directors of Coutts' Bank.

Colonel Philip Langdale.

Lady Chichele Plowden.

Mrs Clare Sheridan.

Major Melville Lee.

Printed books used in quotation have received acknowledgement in passing. Three works, those associated with the names of Creevey, Greville, and Gronow, deserve special mention, for apart from their quotable value their pages exude the faded savour of the Regency and of the succeeding reigns of George IV and William IV, the Kings who so deeply affected the Life of Mrs Fitzherbert.

The index will appear in a later volume.



## CHAPTER I

"Though her mien carries much more invitation than command, to behold her is an immediate check to loose behaviour: to love her was a liberal education."—STEELE (*The Tatler*).

THE Dictionary of National Biography (Clarendon Press), which is a collection not only of those who have been born great, but of the humbler folk who have greatness thrust upon them, contains a brief but discerning notice of Mrs Fitzherbert from the pen of T. E. Kebbel. Written in 1889 it is naturally out of date, but the opening is worth citing for fairness and accuracy:

"MARIA ANNE FITZHERBERT, wife of George IV, born in July 1756, was the youngest<sup>1</sup> daughter of Walter Smythe esq. of Brambridge, Hants. second son of Mr<sup>2</sup> John Smythe of Acton Burnell, Shropshire. . . . She married in 1775 Edward Weld esq. of Lulworth Castle, Dorsetshire who died in the same year. In 1778 his widow married Thomas Fitzherbert of Swynnerton in Staffordshire, by whom she was left a widow a second time in 1781. Mrs Fitzherbert, with a jointure of 2000 pounds<sup>3</sup> a year, now took up her abode at Richmond, where she soon became the centre of an admiring circle. In 1785<sup>4</sup> she first saw the Prince of Wales (born 1762). He fell, or thought he fell, desperately in love with her at first sight, and on one occasion pretended to stab himself in despair. On this occasion she was induced to visit him at Carlton House in company with the Duchess of Devonshire, but soon after went abroad to escape further solicitations. After remaining some time in Holland and Germany, she received an offer

<sup>1</sup> She was the elder daughter.

<sup>3</sup> £1000, to be correct.

<sup>2</sup> Sir, to be correct.

<sup>4</sup> More probably in 1783.



## Mrs Fitzherbert

of marriage from the Prince, which she is said to have accepted with reluctance. They were married on December 21,<sup>1</sup> 1785, in her own drawing-room, by a clergyman of the Church of England, and in the presence of her brother, Mr John Smythe, and her uncle, Mr Errington. By the Marriage Act of 1772 every marriage contracted by a member of the Royal Family under twenty-five years of age without the King's consent was invalid: and by the Act of Settlement, if the heir-apparent married a Roman Catholic, he forfeited his right to the Crown. It was argued, however, that a man could not be said to marry when he merely went through a ceremony which he knew to be invalid. According to one account, repeated by Lord Holland in his *Memoirs of the Whig Party*, Mrs Fitzherbert took the same view, said the marriage was all nonsense, and knew well enough that she was about to become the Prince's mistress. The story is discredited by her well-known character, by the footing on which she was always received by other members of the Royal Family, and by the fact that, even after the marriage of the Prince Regent with Caroline of Brunswick, she was advised by her own Church (Roman Catholic) that she might lawfully live with him. Nobody seems to have thought the worse of her; she was received in the best Society and was treated by the Prince at all events as if she was his wife. . . ."

So reads a fair and impartial account of a romance which was startling at the time and which has left unceasing ripples on the tide of Time. It is not too much to reckon the love of Mrs Fitzherbert and her once charming Prince with some of the great loves of all time: with Tristan and Iseult, with Abélard and Héloïse: with Nelson and Lady Hamilton, were it not that a mysterious but canonical cover shields Mrs Fitzherbert's name. The great Mistresses of History

<sup>1</sup> December 15, to be correct.

## Family History

had to stay on the other side of the hedge which shelters the Royal divinity. Mrs Fitzherbert possessed marriage lines, though for all practical purposes they were written in invisible ink.

At no time was Mrs Fitzherbert any man's mistress. Her position was delicate and unique. Often in past history as in modern life the mistress has played the part of wife. Mrs Fitzherbert was the only wife who for reasons of State had to pretend to be the mistress. How bravely and unselfishly she filled the part accounts for the respect and affection she gradually won from the whole Royal Family.

But for her casual meeting with the Prince in 1783, her life would have been secluded and unknown to History. Her beauty might have drawn notice from historians of the Regency and her virtue a judicious comment from Catholic writers, but the single and fateful step which she took on December 15, 1785, caused that beauty and virtue to be illuminated by the fierce light which beats around a Throne. That step was illegal, for by it she defied the Royal Marriage Act. That Act had "encountered opposition from all that was wise and virtuous in the land." It was branded in the Journals of the Lords by protests believed to be written by the guiding hand of Edmund Burke. No matter: it was the law of the land.

To the account given in the Dictionary of National Biography may be added the exact date of her birth, July 26, 1756, and that she was the eldest child, not the "youngest daughter," of Walter Smythe.

The Smythes were old Catholic Royalists, who like many others of the same stock and persuasion, had sacrificed their all for the House of Stuart and were rewarded by the malignities of the Popish Plot, the ambiguity of one Catholic Sovereign and the folly of another. They had received a Baronetcy from Charles II in 1660, and in spite of the social boycott

## Mrs Fitzherbert

which descended upon the old Faith, they lived up to their motto :

REGI SEMPER FIDELIS.

When a daughter of this ancient House became the secret bride of a Prince of the new Dynasty, the motto developed a poignant meaning. It became prophetic as well as retrospective.

Maria Anne Smythe was probably born at Tong Castle in Shropshire. The Castle belonged to the last Duke of Kingston, on whose behalf it was occupied by Walter Smythe, an officer returned from the Austrian Army, and his wife Mary Errington, of the same ancient family which bred Archbishop Errington.

The evidence for the nativity at Tong is summarised in a *History of Tong* by George Griffiths who quotes a letter from H. F. J. Vaughan (November 17, 1884) :

" Mrs Fitzherbert was born in the Red Room at Tong Castle, having arrived somewhat unexpectedly during a visit of her parents at Tong, as I was informed by the late Madame Durant, with whose family my own was intimate."

The Durants purchased the Castle in 1760 and sold it to Lord Bradford in 1855. It is now standing in picturesque dereliction.

Mr Wilkins recorded another possible *venue* for the child of destiny. According to Colonel Kenyon Slaney, M.P., of Hatton Grange, Shifnal, in the same County, her parents had started for London when Mrs Smythe was seized by her pains. In consequence her child was born near-by in Hatton Hall Farm, a building still standing. Colonel Kenyon Slaney heard it from his great-aunt, Mrs Holmes, who died in 1893 at the age of ninety. In a private letter Mr Wilkins thought " the burden of proof seems rather to show that she was born in the Red Room of Tong Castle."

The Smythes, being a younger branch of the family,

## Family History

bought an estate at Brambridge, near Winchester, where their remaining children were born. This was in proximity to Red Rice where lived Mr Errington, the uncle of the children.

Of Maria Anne Smythe's childhood and youth not a word remains save that she was sent to Paris to be educated by the "Blue Nuns" (the Order of the Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary). An English house of the Order was situate in the Faubourg St Antoine and was devoted to the care of daughters of the old Faith who had no means to acquire learning or deportment at home.

One incident of childhood survives in Charles Langdale's book:

"Attentions from Royalty, as I have heard Mrs Fitzherbert say, as if to prognosticate her future destinies, commenced with her at a very early age. Having accompanied her parents, while yet a child, to see the King of France at his solitary dinner at Versailles, and seeing Louis the Fifteenth pull a chicken to pieces with his fingers, the novelty of the exhibition struck her fancy so forcibly that, regardless of Royal etiquette, she burst into a fit of laughter, which attracted the Royal notice, and His Majesty sent her a dish of sugar plums by one of his courtiers. The bearer of this Royal present was the Duke de Soubise, as she afterwards heard from himself, who well remembered the circumstance; and it is rather a curious coincidence, in her connection with Royalty, that the last dregs of bitterness were presented to her from a Royal table connected with a French sovereign, Louis the Eighteenth."

This was an allusion to the famous banquet given by George as Prince Regent to the exiled House of France in 1811. Mrs Fitzherbert was personally refused her place at the Royal table and declined to be present.

The mention of Louis XV gives us a date before the

## Mrs Fitzherbert

year 1774 for the incident. Incredible as it seems, it was possible to watch Monarchs feeding like the lions being fed at the Zoo, a condition to which happily not even Constitutional Democracy ever reduced English Royalty, though Pepys does record King Charles II feeding under such circumstances at Whitehall.

The present line of Smythes, Baronets of Acton Burnell, derives from Sir Edward Smythe, the elder brother of Mrs Fitzherbert's father, whose sister, Constantia, married the fifth Lord Langdale and whose daughter married the sixteenth Lord Stourton, whose brother the Hon. Charles Langdale published in 1856:

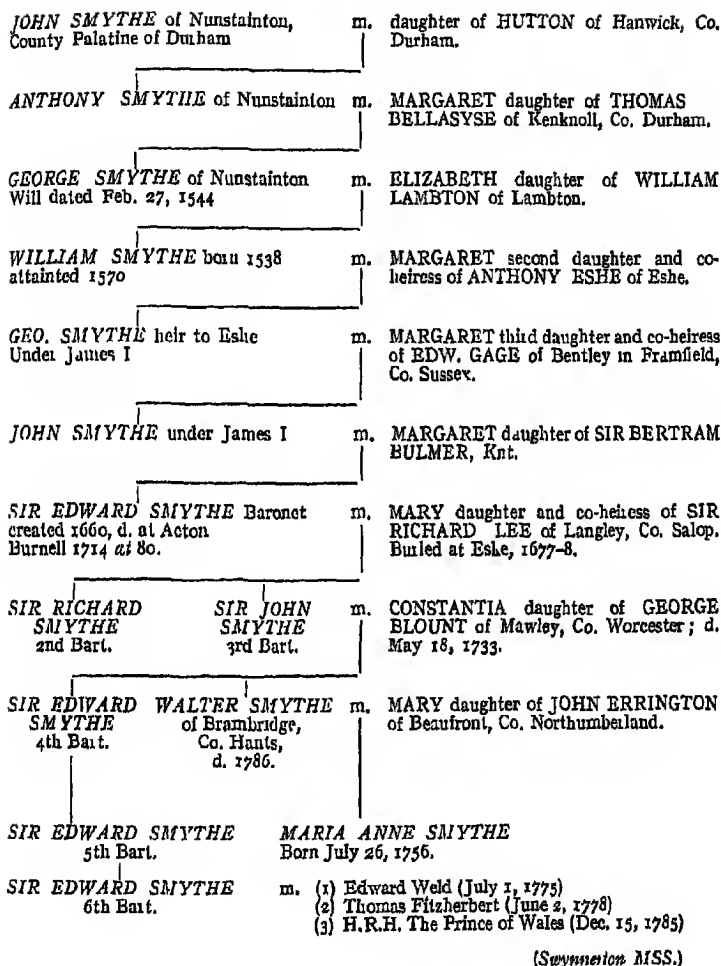
*"Memoirs of Mrs Fitzherbert: with an account of her marriage with H.R.H. the Prince of Wales, afterwards King George the Fourth."*<sup>1</sup>

Maria Anne Smythe became celebrated for her beauty, which Mr Wilkins preserves in imaginary detail: "her abundant hair was of a pale gold, her eyes hazel-brown, her complexion that of the wild rose and hawthorn, her features exquisitely chiselled, her figure full of grace." The miniature of Walter Smythe at Swynnerton is said to resemble his famous daughter: hooked nose, or, at least, curved in youth, fine arched eyebrows, and beautiful mouth. Family tradition records her shapely snow-white bosom and the small feet which Cosway was careful to reproduce in his famous full-length sketch. She was the White Rose of England and had only to wait for suitors, who arrived from a limited circle. Catholic marriages were then arranged between the old families who sought to preserve the Faith and properties of their descendants from the peril of mixed religion. Even so, it was a losing battle and year by year old names disappeared from the Catholic roll. The disadvantages of the old Faith were numerous. The Houses of Parliament,

<sup>1</sup> Richard Bentley.

# Family History

## PEDIGREE OF MRS FITZHERBERT



## Mrs Fitzherbert

the Army and Navy were barred to those who accepted the Council of Trent. Catholic Emancipation, which Mrs Fitzherbert lived to enjoy, was not yet formulated on the political horizon. Pains and Penalties, the wiles of lawyers and the pressure of neighbours, most of all intermarriage with Protestants, had so diminished their ranks that it was calculated that only a third of the old Catholic families remained fast between the Revolution of 1688 and Emancipation in 1829. As each Popish Peer or squeamish squire abandoned the ancient Faith, so many yeomen, retainers, and out-lying relations were left without the Chapel, which ownership of Hall and land alone could procure.

Those who remained true, passed to chance careers on the Continent or led lives of nullified ambition at home. There was no London Society awaiting Catholic girls. Sooner or later they made the decision to enter a Convent or to accept such husbands as the Catholic community could provide. There does not appear to have been any romance in the early life of Miss Smythe and it is easier to assign her acceptance of two older husbands to obedience than to love.

She made no demur to marrying Edward Weld of Lulworth, in Dorsetshire, although he was a widower twenty-six years older than herself. She became the mistress of Lulworth Castle, a stately four-sided pile which has fallen to fire in recent years. We borrow an account from Augustus Hare's *Story of My Life*: "We went on to Lulworth Castle, stern and stately, quadrangular with round towers at the corners, standing on a terraced base, with beautiful park and woods around. We saw the pictures, a few good family portraits of the Welds and Charles X's room which he inhabited when in exile."

There she could have performed her devotions with the aid of the famous Lulworth Psalter, which has since the fire become the property of the nation. They



MRS WILD (AFTERWARDS MRS FITZHERBERT)  
From the painting by Thomas Gainsborough  
By kind permission of Mrs Alfred Noyes





## Family History

were married in 1775 and her husband died in the same year. "She was then very beautiful. She dined at Moreton on the day she was nineteen—perfectly unaffected and unassuming in manner."<sup>1</sup>

In later years she told Minney Seymour, her adopted daughter, that she had always been a most unlucky woman. Mr Weld apparently prepared a Will leaving her all he could, but was persuaded to accompany her on a ride, during which he met with an accident which eventually proved fatal. When he died, the Will was unsigned and the "Widow Weld" had to depend on the generosity of his succeeding brother, Thomas Weld. The Framptons offered her a home "knowing that Mrs Weld was so young and without any friends with her. This friendly conduct was on her side always repaid with great civility and attention."<sup>2</sup>

At Lulworth she only left a novel with her signature, but two pictures of herself, one with her husband and his first wife and a very beautiful portrait of her early beauty. The Weld tradition recorded that "when being painted for this portrait she was so indignant the first sitting at the artist's outline of her fuzzy head, filled in with grey impaste, that she jumped up saying: 'Why, the man has given me a grey wig,' and bounced out of the room, vowing that nothing would induce her to sit any more to him."<sup>3</sup>

Stonyhurst was a Weld property and passed to Thomas Weld, who made it over to the Jesuits with historic results to Catholic education.

It was a tradition that her marriage with Mr Weld was one only in name. He was anxious to give her his name and to make certain settlements in her favour. To this both families had agreed and Miss Smythe humbly submitted. Mr Wilkins wrote privately to this effect: "Mr Weld was on his death-bed and anxious

<sup>1</sup> *Journal of Mary Frampton.*

<sup>2</sup> *Journal of Mary Frampton.*

<sup>3</sup> Account given by Charles Weld Blundell to W. H. Wilkins.

## Mrs Fitzherbert

to provide for the portionless daughter of an important family. By this marriage he was able to evade various duties and fines on his estates that would be levied owing to the Penal Laws."

Her life as a widow was closed in 1778 when she accepted Thomas Fitzherbert of Swynnerton and assumed the name which she has transmitted famously to History. The Fitzherberts dated from an antiquity which made most of the English nobility seem mushrooms. The Royal House could barely account so distant a pedigree in the male line. For seven centuries the Fitzherberts of Norbury had held the Lordship of the Manor granted to them by the Prior of Tutbury in 1125 in the reign of Henry I. The second husband of Maria Anne Smythe was twenty-fifth Lord of the Manor.

Swynnerton still stands on elevated ground near Stone, in Staffordshire. The house rises in the grandiose Classical style so dear to English Land-owners. Across the undulating Park the view is truly superb. Stafford Castle is visible across twelve miles, and further still the Wrekin marks the sky line thirty miles away. It was a view Mrs Fitzherbert must have often admired. Her drawing-room (now adorned by Russell's beautiful picture of her) and her nuptial chamber survive, also the Chapel in which she heard Mass, though this is now a nursery and schoolroom—the family having built a finer Gothic Church which is connected with the Hall by a long passage. Otherwise Swynnerton remains much as Mrs Fitzherbert knew it one hundred and sixty years ago. The same magnificent trees met her eye including the great oak, which after a thousand years of leafage has passed into dry and antlered old age. Immediately opposite the entrance stands the graveyard and the old Catholic Church, now dedicated to the Established Religion. A Crusader's tomb and a Lady Chapel proclaim its ancient owner-

## Family History

ship, but the Fitzherbert tombs are at Norbury. It is singular that two Protestant Rectors of the same name of Robinson (though no relation) drowned themselves in the same pond. It is difficult to suggest a reason unless in despair of converting the owners of the Hall.

Boredom was Mrs Fitzherbert's only trouble and she was fond of visiting her neighbours, the Jervis family of Meaford, and watching the coaches pass through the ford on their way to London. For hours she used to sit in the drawing-room window dreaming of a gayer world, and a Society from which her Religion practically made her outcast. What were her dreams, her hopes, her temptations?

We can only judge that this beautiful and childless woman was a little bored, according to a record kept by a Miss Jervis, daughter of Sir Edward Jervis, second Lord St Vincent, at Meaford:

"The famous Mrs Fitzherbert then living at Swynnerton was a great friend of my father's and used to like to come to Meaford, as it was more gay than Swynnerton. She gave him a curious gold ring, which I have, said to have been found in an Abbey in Westmorland. In the inside is the following inscription: *Above all riches fear God*; the letters very deeply cut and all capital Roman letters. He gave her a miniature of her brother Mr Wat Smythe, also a great friend of my father's and wonderfully handsome."<sup>1</sup>

With the years Miss Jervis became Lady Forester and enchanted a long list of Beaudom, from the great Duke of Wellington to Sir Arthur Sullivan, whose letters fill her autograph book. Old Sir John Jervis became Lord St Vincent after his great naval victory of the name. From his Fitzherbert neighbours he picked up a great liking for Catholics, whose claims he always maintained. During his service in the Medi-

<sup>1</sup> *Lady Forester's Autograph Book.*

## Mrs Fitzherbert

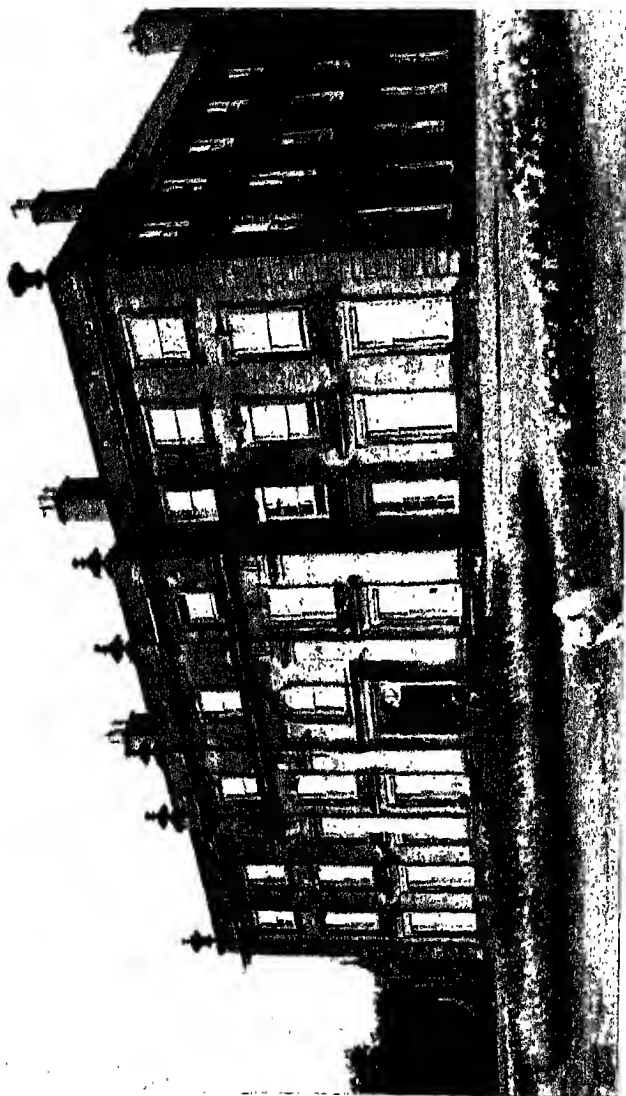
terranean he wrote once to his brother: "Tell Mrs Fitzherbert, when you see her, I have had two Benedictions from the Pope, who patted my face and called me *Anima Bella*. What would she give for such a happiness?"

The history of the Fitzherbert marriage is recorded in a MS book of Deeds collected and edited at Swynnerton in 1828.

"Thomas Fitzherbert of Swinnerton and Twenty Fourth Lord of the Manor of Norbury, eldest son and heir of Thomas Fitzherbert and Mary Teresa Throckmorton, was born at Swinnerton August 30, 1746 and married June 24, 1778 to Mary Anne Smythe the eldest daughter of Walter Smythe of Brambridge.

"By the marriage settlement of June 6, 1778 a Jointure of £400 was settled upon her. To which he added £600 a year more by his will dated September 18, 1780 proved July 4, 1781 making a total jointure of £1000 a year which she has enjoyed ever since May 7, 1781 to the present time (November 1827, a period of 46 years).

"Mr. Thomas Fitzherbert was a tall and powerful man with a tendency to corpulency which he endeavoured to counteract by great abstemiousness in diet and by the most astonishing efforts of bodily activity and violent exercise to which he unfortunately fell a victim. After one of his customary amazing pedestrian feats he was affected with pulmonary disease which became chronic. To remedy the baneful effects resulting from the indiscreet abuse of his athletic powers he proceeded to the warmer climate of Nice in Piedmont; but this disease had made too great a progress and he fell a victim to the very practises adopted to insure his health and preserve his life. He expired at Nice on May 7, 1781 aged 34 years leaving his wife a second time a young widow of 24 years 9 months 13 days. The celebrity this lady has acquired in the world for her connection with the Prince of Wales (now King George IV) is still a subject of interest and discussion."



SWYNNERTON HALL, STAFFORDSHIRE

The seat of Thomas Fitzherbert, Esq., Mrs Fitzherbert's second husband. The old chapel appears on the extreme right and the modern chapel on the extreme left.



## Family History

Tradition further states that Mr Fitzherbert's illness commenced with his exertions during the Gordon Riots of 1780 when Catholic houses were pillaged in London.

The family record retains an admirable discretion. It cannot be presumed that the Fitzherberts did not follow her further career with intense interest. They may have made inquiries and the results are recorded in the same volume :

" It is supposed that His Royal Highness formed her acquaintance and attracted by her beauty and graceful manners, which ripened into a passion on his part, which ultimately, it is universally credited, ended in a private Marriage—presumed to have been celebrated in France by an English Catholic priest. Of the exact truth of this fact nothing is positively known by the Fitzherbert family."

They continued to pay her jointure and kept their counsel. It is possible that Mrs Fitzherbert had a daughter whose surviving descendants have passed through the female line into the Fitzherbert family, which Mrs Fitzherbert herself had failed to provide with an heir.



## CHAPTER II

" Nevertheless, in Madame ——— her wealth, her beauty, and her sweet nature were of themselves as naught, for these rare advantages acquired a religious lustre from her charming modesty and virtuous education. So it was that the Prince was not long on the scent of this flower fallen from Heaven ere he was stricken with the love fever. He fell into a state of melancholy: then flew into a rage and swore to enjoy by magic, by force, by trickery, or by her consent so charming a creature. At first he pursued her hotly with honeyed words: but soon knew by her joyous manner that in her own mind she had determined to remain virtuous, seeing that she made answer to him, without feigning surprise at the thing and without being angry, like women of easy virtue."—BALZAC (*The Pretended Courtesan*).

MRS FITZHERBERT was left with the lease of a small house at the end of Park Street, running parallel with Park Lane. This house has disappeared, but it was pointed out by Colonel George Damer to his daughter, Lady Constance Leslie, who made a note in later years: " Mrs Fitzherbert was married at her house in Park St. now destroyed. Papa has shown it to me. It is where the beginning of Hereford St. lies."

The Grosvenor Office kindly supply a note:

" There was a street called Hereford St, which was built in 1774 and existed until 1864 when the original leases expired. The houses in this street were all pulled down in 1933. The house Mrs Fitzherbert was married in must have been at the East end of the present Hereford House where it abuts on to Park St."

In this case we can imagine that a more romantic scene was once played at the back of the Marble Arch Cinema than has ever been shown to modern audiences on the Film.

Mrs Fitzherbert was left Mr Fitzherbert's carriages and horses, " also the ponies or galloways she usually

## Arrival in London

drives in the phaeton." She was later able to lease a villa nearby at Richmond, where (the story runs) she first exchanged glances with the young Prince of Wales. Another story says he first saw her driving in the Park. He was just come of age and combined such gifts and attractions with his high position that he seemed to call for Nemesis from the gods. They sent him instead his Guardian Angel, with whom he became acquainted by introduction in Lady Sefton's box at the Opera. Mrs Fitzherbert could not resist the lure of London life, especially as her beauty opened a path for her into Society. Society in London then consisted of fifty great families with such attendants as the Arts and Politics could provide.

Mrs Fitzherbert had determined to plunge quietly and respectably into the vortex of Mayfair. The *Morning Herald* reported:

(March 20, 1784): "Mrs Fitzherbert is arrived in London for the season."

And later (July 27, 1784): "A new Constellation has lately made an appearance in the fashionable hemisphere, that engages the attention of those whose hearts are susceptible to the power of beauty. The Widow of the late Mr Fitzherbert has in her train half our young nobility. As the Lady has not, as yet, discovered a partiality for any of her admirers, they are all animated with hopes of success."

Mrs Fitzherbert's residence at Richmond or Twickenham presents a real difficulty. Mr Wilkins gives an illustration of "Marble Hill where Mrs Fitzherbert was living when she first met the Prince of Wales," but this seems impossible if, as is stated, it had passed to Lady Suffolk's brother, "and when he died it reverted to Miss Hotham, who let it to Mrs Fitzherbert." He died in 1792 and Mrs Fitzherbert could not have occupied it until 1793. Where then was her villa in the 'eighties?

## Mrs Fitzherbert

According to Cobbett's *Memorials of Twickenham* there was a pretty cottage residence called Riverside next to Orleans House, which was occupied for a short time by Mrs Fitzherbert. Another residence was Gifford Lodge on Twickenham Common. I am informed on trustworthy authority that it was the private residence of Mrs Fitzherbert and her children, Marble Hill being the house wherein guests were entertained."

On the Dysart estate on Ham Common is Ormeley Lodge which the late Lady Sudeley (niece of Lord Dysart) was positive was occupied by Mrs Fitzherbert. Old residents support the same tradition. In 1796 she was occupying a villa associated with the name of Tollemache, which is the Dysart family name. This points to Ormeley Lodge.

Georgiana Duchess of Devonshire wrote a description of Lady Sefton, which survives, as: "a compound of vanity, nonsense, folly, and good nature, she always contrives to put her faults in the clearest light. Of all women I ever knew she is the soonest affronted and the soonest appeased, and if she really likes any person she will fight through thick and thin for them."<sup>1</sup>

Such was Mrs Fitzherbert's chaperon, for except as such she has no other claim to remembrance. She would be forgotten with many of the Gaieties and Frivolities of her time, but an incident, of whose importance she was little aware, consigns her name to History. Her minute record, like that of many others, now resting under the rubbish-heap of the Regency period, resembles a small piece of written papyrus drawn out of a tomb in the desert. No doubt Georgiana estimated her at her true value, and by chance her letter survives.

Lady Sefton's Opera Box may have been the scene of her first meeting with the Prince, but in later years John Wilson Croker, who had access to the Prince's

<sup>1</sup> *Chatsworth Papers.*

## She Meets the Prince

memory as King, recorded in his Diary: "The Prince had seen her in her carriage in the Park and was greatly struck with her—inquired who she was—heard the Widow Fitzherbert, contrived to make her acquaintance, and was really mad for love."<sup>1</sup>

Mrs Fitzherbert was introduced under the patronage of Lady Sefton, whose husband, the first Earl of Sefton as the result of a mixed marriage, "conformed to the Established Church in 1768" and was rewarded three years later by an Earldom. Hitherto they had borne the title of Viscount Molyneux, bearing a Cross *moline* for arms, but pressure had weaned them from the old Faith. One of the Earl's Catholic uncles had married an Errington widow, while his predecessor, the seventh Lord Molyneux, was actually a Jesuit described as "old and not having any intention to marry."

Mrs Fitzherbert, though still young—widowed twice before she was twenty-five—had also no immediate intention to marry. Marriage with a Protestant meant that her children would be brought up in the same views. Marriage with a Catholic meant a return to the pious seclusions of Lulworth and Swynnerton.

She was not what is called a *femme fatale*, but Fate certainly descended into her path. It was her fate to tantalise and overwhelm the heart of the Prince of Wales! From the first, love was instant and irresistible on his side. She was flattered, pleased, and frightened. It was impossible for her not to admire this amiable and extravagant Prince, who had the choice of the ladies of London for his pleasure and of the Princesses of the world for his marriage. But she restrained her feelings admirably and sensed the danger to him and the disrepute to herself. Her position was pleasant and settled. She would not dream of exchanging the gold of her good conscience for ill-glittering tinsel.

<sup>1</sup> *Croker Papers.*

## Mrs Fitzherbert

To be the mistress of the Prince of Wales lightly entering his heyday was not social fame to her.

The historical narrative must be now supplied in the words of Lord Stourton (included as a narrative in his nephew, Charles Langdale's book).

"Mrs Fitzherbert was first acquainted with the Prince when residing on Richmond Hill, and soon became the object of his most ardent attentions. During this period she was made the subject of a popular ballad, which designated her under the title of the Sweet Lass of Richmond Hill:

I would crowns resign  
To call her mine  
Sweet Lass of Richmond Hill."

The Ballad about Richmond Hill was being sung at Vauxhall before the end of the 'eighties and before the general public were aware of the Prince's passion, whether for a lass or a widow. The Ballad was an old one, but it could be deliciously applied to the romance of the present. On the whole Mrs Fitzherbert inspired very few poems save such Society verse as Lady Anne Hamilton wrote in "Epics of the Ton" (1807):

"Whom shalt thou, midst this full-blown garden, choose  
To form thy first bright wreath, discerning Muse?  
Say are not her's the most exalted charms  
Who lures an Heir-Apparent to her arms?"

The history of British Balladry may be searched in vain for reference to Mrs Fitzherbert, which is strange, for the Caricaturist, the Balladsman's rude brother, gave her no mercy.

There was a Ballad containing more than a Folk Memory of Mrs Fitzherbert's Romance, which was adapted as a Broadside to Albert Edward Prince of Wales in 1861. The rude lines were far more applicable to his predecessor and great-uncle:

"You mothers and fathers, I hope you'll attend  
Unto these few lines that I have here penned

## She Meets the Prince

Listen to a while unto my simple tale  
About the late doings of our Prince of Wales.

. . . . .

They say our young Prince has done it before  
He has got two wives like a great many more.

. . . . .

There's kind Father Rowe, as good as a King,  
He has my marriage lines and my wedding ring  
My royal husband can't leave me in the lurch  
I am made fast in the Catholic Church."

So much for the popular tradition that a Prince of Wales had two wives, including a Catholic.

To return to the year 1784.

"She was then the widow of Mr Fitzherbert, in possession of an independent income of nearly 2000£ a year, admired and caressed by all who were acquainted with her character and singular attractions.

"Surrounded by so many personal advantages, and the widow of an individual to whom she had been sincerely attached, she was very reluctant to enter into engagements fraught with so many embarrassments, and, when viewed in their fairest light, exposing their object to great sacrifices and difficulties. It is not, therefore, surprising that she resisted, with the utmost anxiety and firmness, the flattering assiduities of the most accomplished Prince of his age. She was well aware of the gulf that yawned beneath those flattering demonstrations of royal adulation.

"For some time her resistance had been availing, but she was about to meet with a species of attack so unprecedented and alarming, as to shake her resolution, and to force her to take that first step which afterwards led by slow (but on the part of the Prince successful) advances, to that union which he so ardently desired and to obtain which he was ready to risk such personal sacrifices. Keate the surgeon, Lord Onslow, Lord Southampton and Mr. Edward Bouverie, arrived at her house in the utmost consternation, informing her, that the life of the Prince was

## Mrs Fitzherbert

in imminent danger—that he had stabbed himself—and that only *her* immediate presence would save him. She resisted, in the most peremptory manner, all their importunities, saying that nothing should induce her to enter Carlton House. She was afterwards brought to share in the alarm, but still, fearful of some stratagem derogatory to her reputation, insisted upon some lady of high character accompanying her, as an indispensable condition; the Duchess of Devonshire was selected. They four drove from Park St. to Devonshire House, and took her along with them. She found the Prince pale and covered with blood. The sight so overpowered her faculties that she was deprived almost of all consciousness. The Prince told her, that nothing would induce him to live unless she promised to become his wife, and permitted him to put a ring round her finger. I believe a ring from the hand of the Duchess of Devonshire was used upon the occasion and not one of his own. Mrs Fitzherbert being asked by me [Lord Stourton] whether she did not believe that some trick had been practised, and that it was not really the blood of His Royal Highness, answered in the negative; and said, she had frequently seen the scar, and that some brandy and water was near his bedside when she was called to him on the day he wounded himself.

“They returned to Devonshire House. A deposition of what had occurred was drawn up, and signed and sealed by each one of the party, and, for all she knew to the contrary, might still be there. On the next day, she left the country, sending a letter to Lord Southampton, protesting against what had taken place, as not being then a free agent. She retired to Aix la Chapelle and afterwards to Holland. The Prince went down into the country to Lord Southampton’s for a change of air.”<sup>1</sup>

Tom Moore in his Diary heard from Lord Essex (August 26, 1825): “Story of the Prince. Attempted once to shoot himself on account of Mrs Fitzherbert:

<sup>1</sup> *Lord Stourton’s Narrative.*

675.535A

On Tuesday the 8<sup>th</sup> of  
July. 1784 Mr & Mrs  
Land. Mr & Mrs came to  
me & told me the  
Duke of Wales had  
run himself thro' the  
body & declared he  
w<sup>d</sup> tear open his bandage  
unless I w<sup>d</sup> accompany  
Mrs Fitzherbert to him.  
We went there & she  
promis'd to marry him.  
At her return but she  
conceives as well as myself

that promises obtain'd in  
such a manner are  
entirely void. G Devonshire

M. Fitzherbert

9<sup>th</sup> of July  
1784





## The Promise Obtained

only fired at the top of the bed and then punctured himself with a sword in the breast." There was no doubt about the wound, for Mrs Fitzherbert testified to the scar all her life.

The actual deposition survives in the possession of the Duke of Devonshire at Chatsworth as follows :<sup>1</sup>

" On Tuesday the 8th of July 1784 Mr Bouverie and Mr Onslow came to me & told me the Prince of Wales had run himself thro' the body & declar'd he wd tear open his bandages unless I wd accompany Mrs Fitzherbert to him. We went there & she promis'd to marry him at her return but she conceives as well as myself that promises obtain'd in such a manner are entirely void.

[signed] G DEVONSHIRE  
M FITZHERBERT

9th of July 1784."

The Duchess wrote to the Prince of Wales :

" I write to you, my D<sup>r</sup> B<sup>r</sup> terrifyd out of my senses. I have [been] in a dreadful state of agitation evr since I saw you & now I must tell you & Mrs F too that I never thought this wd take place & therefore acquiesc'd, but it is indeed madness in both. I have not wrote to tell her to tell her so & will not if you will delay it & consult Charles Fox—for God's sake do. *Je tremble. Je vois des suites affreuses.* I cannot be present for it is not a marriage & I cannot be by at what I do not think one. It is not shabbyness or fear for myself but what I fear for her & you. I always shall certainly shew her every mark of regard. But I cannot be by at what I do not think a marriage. Indeed it is not.— You observe'd some thing was the matter with me & indeed I have been quite wild with ye horror of it ever since. I never thought it cd come to this. Pray see Charles Fox tomorrow or let me write to him. Let me beg you over & over to consult Charles Fox, see him tomorrow."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Chatsworth Papers*, 675. 635A.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 675. 635B.

## Mrs Fitzherbert

Nearly ten years later the Duchess added a note to the deposition (January 29, 1794):

“ Tho so far from the transaction alluded to in the inclos’d paper, I think it right to relate the circumstances attending it ; and tho’ at the time, and now it was a subject of great uneasiness to me yet for that very reason I wish to remind myself of it by this detail. I am the more anxious to disburthen my mind and memory, because I highly disapprove of the weakness of my own conduct, and tho’ at the time I acted from the impulse of the necessity of the moment, of an ill-judging good nature, and of an embarrass’d situation with regard to the Prince yet now that the reflection of 7 years has remov’d the favourable medium thro’ which one is too apt to consider the motives of one’s actions during the moment, I severely reprove myself for want of firmness, tho’ I do not believe I was at all conducive to what may have happened.

“ In the Spring in 83 whilst I was at Bath I heard great reports of the P of Wales’ attachment to Mrs Hodges and afterwards of his falling in love with Mrs Fitzherbert—upon coming to town many circumstances had thrown me into an unfortunate intimacy with him & he would not rest till he told me his passion for Mrs F & his design to marry her ; and any remonstrance from me was always follow’d by threats of killing himself &c.

“ At last he engag’d me to see her, which I did at her own house but she agreed with me in the impossibility of his ideas; and her good sense & resolution seemed so strong that I own I felt secure of her never giving way—and what I had occasioned to observe of her conduct unfortunately prepossessed me in this idea.

“ Under these circumstances, I was call’d out one Evng, whilst there was a party of people playing & supping at D House, by Mr Onslow & Mr Bouverie, informing me with frighten’d countenances that the Prince had stabd himself with his sword; that nothing could be of any use but her going to him that she was

## The Promise Obtained

waiting without & would & indeed cd not go unless I wd accompany her; having nobody to consult I consented & traversd the Court where I found her in her Chariot & we went to Carlton house where we found the prince in bed, his wound still bleeding. He extorted from her some promise of marriage and we left him; we found Ld Southampton very much frightend & who declard his intention of going to the King. Mrs F ownd to me her having given this extorted consent which she looked upon as nul, and in consequence we drew up & signd the inclosd paper, and she went abroad immediately.

"During her stay abroad the P was ever sending her expresses; and as he employd a courier I recommended to him, many went I have since found in my name—he was always persecuting me to write to her to persuade her to marry him—but the most I ever did was urging her to come to some determination not to leave him in this anxious state, and indeed however wearyd I was by his importunities I yet should never have consented to write so much, had I not felt secure of her resolution.

"Great was my surprise at hearing in the Autumn of 85 that she was at Ostende & still more to find she was returned. I saw her, and from this time forward tho I did not mention the subject to her, urged him in every possible way and amongst others by the letter of which the inclosed is a copy.

"In consequence of all this I had a warm & violent conversation with him; the result of which was, that I never should hear anything more on this subject—what passed I know no more of than the rest of the world—only that he told the D of D that in asking the Ds and him to visit Mrs F he did not ask us to visit an improper person."<sup>1</sup>

After the false ceremony performed in Carlton House Mrs Fitzherbert felt that, in spite of the presence of an irreproachable female, she had been trapped. There was actually time to escape before the

<sup>1</sup> *Chatsworth Papers*, 675. 635.

## Mrs Fitzherbert

trap closed. She instantly left the country: a move showing wisdom and acumen on her part. The next move was with the Prince and, as he could not leave the country without the King's leave, it took the form of impassioned addresses.

One of the first to reach her was found by her executor, Sir George Seymour, who made a note of its contents before it was handed to the Duke of Wellington for destruction in 1837.

" July 17, 1784. Is ill under Keate's hands.

" A long letter of 18 pages addressed to Mrs Fitzherbert when abroad. The tone rhapsodical but earnest, threatening to end his life if he cannot live with her. Sends Bracelets not as a Lover to his Mistress, but such as a husband has a right to send and a right to expect his wife will receive—' You know I never presumed to make you any offer with a view of purchasing your Virtue. I know you too well.'

" Says he has long broken with Lady M.<sup>1</sup> Signs not only your most affectionate of Lovers but the tenderest of Husbands."<sup>2</sup>

At the Prince's insistence the Duchess of Devonshire wrote to Mrs Fitzherbert and received this answer:

" My dear Madam

" You may much more easily conceive than my pen is capable of expressing the very unpleasant & cruel situation I feel myself in at this moment, I am a good deal surpris'd at your desiring me to finish this affair one way or the other, you cannot be ignorant, my dear Duchess, that from the first moment it was propos'd, my sentiments have never varied, does not the same reasons now subsist & must they not always be the same? I should think I us'd him very ill had I ever endeavoured to deceive him. I have always spoke & acted very openly with him, but still more strongly in my last than I ever did before and I believe that no

<sup>1</sup> This must be Elizabeth Lady Melbourne, mother of the Premier. She had captured the Prince in 1783.

<sup>2</sup> *Ragley Papers.*

## Journey to Paris

one can say but that my reasons are just & painted in their true colors that I have neither exaggerated or diminish'd anything. In regard of my coming to England I must beg leave to differ with you in opinion as I cannot see the least good effect it could possibly have. I am perfectly well acquainted with every circumstance & why should I appear to give into measures I can never consent too. Whatever Mr F[ox] or his friends say to him they know in their own breasts they cannot approve off and I am confident there is not one of them that will take it upon themselves to say it is a legal proceeding. They may wish to please him & to appear to forward his views wch. they know can never essentially hurt him at least that can never bind him to anything. I don't speake with any want of regard or respect for his friends, but they are certainly not my friends, it is very natural for them to say *such and such are the proposals, it is not our affair & she is of an age to take care of herself.* I must write a line to the — & as I do not wish to detain your servant I must beg leave to conclude once more imploring your interest with *him* as no one is so likely to succeed as y self. I remain, Dr. Madam, truly & sincerely your very affectionate & obliged humble servant

M. FITZHERBERT.'''

Mrs Fitzherbert, accompanied by Lady Anne Barnard, arrived in Paris. Lady Anne was also a confidante of the Prince. The Prince's grief and dismay knew no bounds when he learnt that the bird had escaped the nets of the fowler. He was quite unable to harness his emotions. All bridle he threw to the winds and lashed himself into a mad gallop. His passion was remarkable even in the annals of the susceptible House of Hanover. The very means Mrs Fitzherbert took to allay his frenzy and moderate his gallantry was all that was needed to madden him. He realised that the first and perhaps only woman he ever

<sup>1</sup> *Chatsworth Papers*, 675. 635B.

## Mrs Fitzherbert

loved from the heart had daintily stepped out of reach. Her goodness appealed fatally to a Prince, who hitherto had only known women through their powers of allurements and their readiness to fall.

Mrs Fitzherbert had made no efforts to ensnare the Royal gallivanter. She had been flattered and amused by his attentions. She was not averse to the high layer of Society which opened at his nod. He was born to be the leader of that Society, the rallying point of men of letters, the maelstrom of politics, and the ambition of Englishwomen, whether they swayed him as titled enchantresses or bowed to him as slaves chosen from the market of the *demi-monde*.

He was young, good-looking, and his brows were destined to wear a crown. Already he was acclaimed as "the British Titus," the delight of the world. Although he was not virtuous, he was certainly an intelligent Prince. His mind ran on much else than pleasure, and he had allied himself with the great political Party called the Whigs. The Whigs were in talents brilliant, personally aristocratic, privately immoral, and, after their manner, Radical. They corresponded to the Liberal grandees of Victorian days and to the Labour Peers of a later age, but in their Radicalism only. The Prince's advanced opinions were no doubt a reaction from the busy Toryism of the King, but they were not despicable. He was the pronounced Friend of the People, of Ireland, and of the injured Catholics. The profound friendship of Burke led him to adopt opinions favourable to the American Colonists, and his admiration for Charles Fox swayed him towards the revolutionary ideas which had broken out of France. But the violence of the French Revolution was the means of breaking up the Whigs. It was impossible for a party so aristocratic and constitutional to admit massacre as a means or class-levelling as a Cause.

## The Influence of Fox

The King was seriously alarmed by his boon companionship with Fox. It was true that Fox was unfortunately teaching him more than the advanced opinions of Holland House. He was inducting him to the pleasures of conviviality and the hazards of high gambling. It was difficult to say whether he was receiving more harm from his male or his female friends. The lights of love, that danced upon his path, could be set aside without causing him any permanent injury. These were fragile flames which he could extinguish after he had warmed himself without being singed. But Mrs Fitzherbert's he destined for his hearth.

He was more than a pivot for the Beaux and Dandies of his age. It was not negligible that an heir-apparent to the Throne should be the disciple of Fox and the crony of Sheridan.

The Whigs were in power when the Prince came of age, and they confirmed his affections by proposing that he should receive £100,000 a year from the Civil List. The Whig magnates combined enormous incomes with verbal subservience to the people. As the people paid for the Prince's income, there was some meaning in the words spoken by him in the Upper House: "I exist by the love, friendship, and benevolence of the people, and their cause I will never forsake as long as I live."

In other words he pledged himself to remain a life-long Whig. It was clear that the opinions and the very words of Fox had sunk into his facile mind. But an obstacle to the hopes of the Whigs had arisen against which the most moving persuasions of Fox were doomed to fail: the possibility of a Catholic wife and the forfeiture of the Throne.

Five days after the scene in Carlton House Mr Weltje, the Prince's servant, arrived in Brighton to engage a house for His Royal Highness, who had been



## Mrs Fitzherbert

advised to restore his health by sea-bathing. It was clear that he was exhausted though not dissipated by his pursuit of Mrs Fitzherbert. The Prince spent the next ten weeks at Brighton. He was beside himself and on one occasion rode to London and back in ten hours.

Mrs Fitzherbert's flight may be continued in "Lord Stourton's Narrative." She went from Paris to Aix la Chapelle and thence to Holland:

"In Holland she met with the greatest civilities from the Statholder and his family, lived upon terms of intimacy with them, and was received into the friendship of the Princess of Orange, who, at that very time, was the object of negotiation with the Royal Family of England for the Heir apparent. Frequent inquiries were made about the Prince and the English Court in confidential communications between her and the Princess, it being wholly unknown to the Princess that she was her most dangerous rival. She said she was often placed in circumstances of considerable embarrassment; but her object being to break through her own engagements, she was not the hypocrite she might have appeared afterwards, as she would have been very happy to have furthered this alliance. She afterwards saw this Princess in England, and continued to enjoy her friendship, but there was always a great coolness on the part of the Statholder towards her.

"She left Holland in the Royal Barge, and spent above another year abroad, endeavouring to 'fight off' (to use her own phrase) a union fraught with such dangerous consequences to her peace and happiness. Couriers after couriers passed through France, carrying the letters and propositions of the Prince to her in France and Switzerland. The Duke of Orleans was the medium of this correspondence. The speed of the couriers exciting the suspicion of the French Government, three of them were at different times put into prison. Wrought upon and fearful, from the past, of

## A Further Promise

the desperation of the Prince, she consented, formally and deliberately, to promise she would never marry any other person; and lastly she was induced to return to England, and to agree to become his wife, on those conditions which satisfied her own conscience, though she could have no legal claim to be the wife of the Prince.

" I have seen a letter of thirty-seven pages, written, as she informed me, not long before this step was taken, entirely in the handwriting of the Prince; in which it is stated by him that his Father would connive at the union "

This magnificent letter, *longa et verbosa epistola*, actually amounts to forty-two pages and has survived the perils and fluctuations of time.<sup>1</sup> It is dated November 3, 1785, and was entrusted to a faithful courier called Hunter. It is interesting to follow the Prince's excitements in his script and even to count the number of quills used and worn out in the course of this, the longest love-letter in the English language. It is also the only love-letter surviving from the Prince to Mrs Fitzherbert.<sup>2</sup>

If such were the feelings of the Prince, those of Mrs Fitzherbert were inexpressible. But during the year 1785 she kept a Commonplace book which has survived amongst the *Portarlington Papers*. She did not trust her thoughts to diaries or to letters even to her closest friends.

Some of the sentences she wrote at the time must have given her solace or enabled her to arrange the confusions in her mind.

" Advice is like a jest which every fool is offering another and yet won't take himself."

<sup>1</sup> It is reproduced as Appendix I of the present volume.

<sup>2</sup> *Fitzherbert Papers*, I.

## Mrs Fitzherbert

" I ask no kind return in love  
No tempting charm to please:  
Far from the Heart such gifts remove  
That sighs for peace and ease.

" Nor cure nor peace that heart can know  
That like the needle true  
Turns at the touch of Joy or Woe  
But turning trembles too."

" I find myself, as Dryden expresses himself, in so many ways obliged and so little able to return favours that, like those who owe too much, I can only live by getting further in your debt."

" No Law is made for Love,  
Love is not in our choice but in our Fate."

" A Stock may chance to wear a Crown  
And timber as a Lord take place:  
A Statue may put on a frown  
And cheat us with a thinking face."

" What's Royalty but power to please oneself?  
How wretchedly he rules  
That's served by cowards and advised by fools."

" Life for delays and doubts no time doth give.  
None ever yet made too much haste to live."

" Marriage, thou curse of love and snare of life,  
That first debased a mistress to a wife!"

" A slavery beyond enduring  
But that 'tis of our own procuring  
So men are by themselves betrayed  
To quit the freedom they enjoyed  
And run their necks into a noose  
They'd break 'em after to break loose!"

## The Dilemma Continues

### FORTUNE

" I can enjoy her whilst she's kind  
But when she dances in the wind  
And shakes her wings and will not stay,  
I puff the Prostitute away.  
The little or the much she gave is quickly resigned  
Content with poverty, my soul I arm ;  
And Virtue, though in rags, will keep me warm."

### WOMAN'S HONOUR

" Woman, Sense, and Nature's easy fool  
If poor weak woman swerve from Virtue's side,  
Ruin ensues, contempt, and endless shame  
And one false step entirely damns her name.  
In vain, with tears the loss she may deplore  
In vain, look back to what she was before  
She falls like Stars that set to rise no more."

In Mrs Fitzherbert's handwriting these citations found a special force and especially in the fatal year. It is seldom that such a collection can be so revealing of the writer's emotions at the date of writing. There can be little doubt that the thoughts passed through her mind and that several times she found the exact quotation needed to express them. Love, Royalty, Marriage, Fortune, and Woman's Honour were the themes uppermost. These were the testimonies she wrote during a time she dared not write and could not discuss the pressing dilemma before her.

What is a religious Lady to do when she receives proposals from a Prince which would not admit her to the position of a Princess? It was the theme of Pope's *Elegy on an Unfortunate Lady*. As Henry Hallam commented on the same: "an English gentleman did not think his niece honoured by being the mistress of a Prince." Such was now the case with old Mr Errington, her uncle.

She made up her mind to remain an exile from the English shore until the Prince was happily or unhappily

## Mrs Fitzherbert

married to a wife more in accordance with the British Constitution than herself. With the year 1785 she passed from Paris to Switzerland and Plombières, in Lorraine. She continued to be dogged by spies and pursued by couriers. His letters reached her, though not without being intercepted by the French authorities, who were Gallic or gallant enough to allow them to pass. They were not documents of State and they were more hysterical than intelligible.

The Prince's state of mind was revealed by Lord Holland, who wrote :

" Mrs Fox, who was living at St Anne's, has repeatedly assured me that he came down thither more than once to converse with her and Mr Fox on the subject, that he cried by the hour, that he testified to the sincerity and violence of his passion and his despair by the most extravagant expressions and actions, rolling on the floor, striking his forehead, tearing his hair, falling into hysterics, and swearing that he would abandon the country, forego the crown, sell his jewels and plate, and scrape together a competence to fly with the object of his affections to America."<sup>1</sup>

The Prince thought of following Mrs Fitzherbert abroad, and in April interviewed Sir James Harris (Lord Malmesbury) on making a possible appearance at The Hague where Harris was posted. The Prince proposed travel as a means of retirement and economy. A month later (May 23, 1785) he sent for Harris again and although he assured him he had given up the idea of travelling at the advice of his friends, he had also determined not to marry. Though Mrs Fitzherbert was not mentioned, she was clearly at the back of his next sentences: "I never will marry! My resolution is taken on that subject. I have settled it with Frederick. No, I never will marry. . . . Frederick will marry and

<sup>1</sup> *Posthumous Memoirs of the Whig Party.*

## The Letter to Errington

the crown will descend to his children." Frederick was the Duke of York.

Having decided to offer honourable union, the Prince put himself in relations with Mrs Fitzherbert's uncle, Mr Errington, and a letter to him from the Prince survives (June 21, 1785):

"I yesterday sent a note to your home requesting you would have the goodness to call upon me for a few minutes at Carlton House. But your servants sent me word that you were out of Town and that it was not known when you were expected again in Town but certainly not for a week or ten days to come. The object of the conversation I wish to have with you was *this* to request you would carry a message from me to Mrs Fitzherbert which is just to mention to her, that as it cannot be less painful and awkward to her than is, I confess to you the footing we are upon in the world and as no one can feel more for her than I, I dare to hope she will not be surprised or offended with me, if when we meet—I bow to her and shake hands with her which will put an end to the difficulty we have both of us so long felt at meeting at a third house. I should not have [*sic*] thus much had I not had some reasons to suppose it could not be disagreeable to Mrs Fitzherbert, having understood that she no longer felt the smallest degree of animosity or ill-will towards me but the very reverse. To you, my dear Errington, I address myself first as I have always dealt most openly with you in everything that related to Mrs Fitzherbert and as I thought of course you were therefore the proper person to convey such [*sic*], which I have requested that you should make no secret of, either to Mrs Fitzherbert's family, if questioned about it, or indeed to any other. I said indeed of the Society in which you live, I shall always be happy of manifesting to the world my most affectionate regard for Her to the world.

"This was the object of the interview I wished to have with you but you being out of Town I had re-

## Mrs Fitzherbert

course to my friend and to Mrs Fitzherbert's friend who has been so kind to convey this message for me and he assures me that Mrs Fitzherbert has not the smallest objection to what I have proposed and has allowed him to say so, I therefore take up my pen to assure you of this circumstance and to request you [*sic*] upon it with respect to her Family and to the world as I have already mentioned I should have entreated you to have done, had you been the Bearer of the message. I will not trespass longer upon you except to say that I hope to see you when you return to Town and am at all times, dear Errington, very sincerely yours, G. P."<sup>1</sup>

In his desperate efforts to reach Mrs Fitzherbert the Prince devised every possible plan. In July he relieved his feelings by riding on horseback from Carlton House to the Pavilion and back. In August, 1785, he wrote to the King begging him to allow him to reside in Brunswick for purposes of foreign travel. He gave as his reason that the plan he had devised for economy was unattainable as long as he resided in England.<sup>2</sup>

From the beginning the Prince recognised the Catholic difficulty. The standards of Courts and Churches differ. It has been allowed at Courts that a Prince, who is deprived by reasons of State from marrying whom he wills, must be countenanced in his secret amours. Mrs Fitzherbert was anxious to remain in her Communion. On this point there could be no indulgence even by a Church desirous to stand well with Cæsar. The same difficulty had met Lady Waldegrave, a devout Anglican, when sought by the King's brother, the Duke of Gloucester. Lady Waldegrave had protested that though she was too inconsiderable a person to become his wife, she was too considerable to become his mistress. Sauce for the Duke of Gloucester was also sauce for the Prince of Wales.

The Prince decided to follow his uncle's example

<sup>1</sup> *Fitzherbert Papers*, II. (Some words illegible.)

<sup>2</sup> *Windsor Archives*.



MINIATURE OF MRS FITZHERBERT BY COSWAY  
Returned to her by William IV after the death of George IV  
and given by her to Sir George Stymour  
By kind permission of the trustees of the Ragley estate





## Relations with the King

and meet the conscience of his beloved by a form of private marriage: whatever her least terms might be.

His relations with the King grew steadily worse, although the Queen tried to persuade peace. One of her letters to the Prince passed into Mrs Fitzherbert's custody, when or how there is no telling. The Queen was delighted with the affectionate way in which the Prince had expressed himself to her and wrote (May 10, 1785), "but I confess our mutual attachment would be still stronger cemented if your statements were the same towards the King, whom I am clear you misjudge totally and who deserves every friendship and respect from you as a Man, but still more as a Sovereign and a Father. In both these Capacities he is so great that you will find it difficult to meet with anyone capable of refusing him justice. I, for my part, who know the excellence of his character so perfectly well cannot but wish your eyes may be opened for your own welfare."

As the last stages of Mrs Fitzherbert's exile drew to a close, the Prince passed from plan to plan with a sanguine fervour which suppressed all obstacles. At one time his depression passing to desperation had alarmed his friends. At another time the jubilation of his optimism convinced others that he had persuaded Mrs Fitzherbert to return. The King himself believed at this time that somehow he had already married her.

The year 1785 was within its last stages. Mrs Fitzherbert's return was promised for Christmas, and the Prince was secretly applying for the aid of a clergyman. Though he was under close observation at the time, those most interested in his movements, Mr Pitt and the King, were entirely in the dark. An Emissary of the Government, whom the Prince confessed to be very gentlemanlike, managed to enter into conversation with him, and during a morning walk to inquire if the Prince had any thoughts of going abroad. The

## Mrs Fitzherbert

Prince wrote to Mrs Fitzherbert, who was waiting in Paris (November 3, 1785):

"I answered I had and that I believed I should from the total ruined state of my affairs be obliged to put that plan soon in execution and I added that as there was no secret in that I made no scruple of talking very openly of it."

The Emissary between the Prince and the Minister appears from a stray letter unpublished in Tomline's *Life of Pitt* to have been Mr Elliott, the British Minister at Copenhagen, who had written to Mr Pitt from Brighton (*Secret*, October 17, 1785):

"Encouraged by the very flattering attention you have given to my verbal communications upon a subject of a most delicate nature, I do not hesitate to take up the pen to convey to you in writing the real state of a business, in which I at present find myself engaged, and which I must either drop or prosecute as you shall be pleased to direct.

"I need not recapitulate the circumstances that have induced the Prince of Wales to honor me with a considerable share of H.R.H.'s confidence since my arrival at Brighthelmstone, where I came solely with the intention of bathing in the sea, and of profiting of those moments of leisure in which I have been permitted to cultivate the acquaintance. But I think myself bound to assert, that totally unconnected with H.R.H.'s attendants and society, I am indebted entirely to the Prince's own condescension and indulgence for the frankness with which he has been pleased at different times to converse with me upon the inconveniences of his present situation and his desire of being relieved from them.

"As an honest man and loyal subject, I could not refrain sometimes from expressing with zeal those sentiments, to which you, Sir, are not a stranger and of combating, to the utmost of my ability, some prejudices to which I should have thought myself culpable

## A Warning to Pitt

in having yielded. So far, however, from having incurred H.R.H.'s displeasure by this conduct, it has led to his choice of me to open a communication with the King's most confidential servants, and I am empowered to speak to those, whom I thought the most likely not to oppose his wishes, but to convey the knowledge of them in the properest manner to the King.

"There is so much difficulty in putting upon paper the secret circumstances I have learnt, or in detailing the imminent danger to which H.R.H. is exposed from a manner of life that can be thoroughly understood but by those who are eye-witnesses of it, that, out of respect to the Prince, I shall be justified in not dwelling upon so distressing a subject, but that I may be allowed to advance that in my opinion H.R.H. risks being lost to himself, his Family and his Country, if a total and sudden change does not take place, I will even venture to add, that the Prince is at this moment not insensible that such a change is necessary, and that it is one of the motives which make him desirous of visiting the Continent under such restrictions as the King may think proper to advise. His own desire is to go to those places which shall be approved of, with no other retinue than Colonels Lee and Slaughter, or to join me to the Party, if the King should honor me with a sufficient degree of confidence to justify me in accepting so flattering an offer. As H.R.H. does not wish to travel as Prince of Wales, it is not apprehended that any addition to his income would be necessary for the purpose of travelling, and it is with pleasure I observed that the Prince expects that his future relief from his present embarrassments might be the consequence of the satisfaction the King and Country would receive from his conduct abroad. A complete break in rooted habits of life and opinions can only be produced by a strong remedy. I fear the effects of bad example and prejudice will with difficulty be got the better of, except at some distance from the scene of them. In that view, I do not hesitate to recommend

## Mrs Fitzherbert

to your serious attention the purport of this letter. H.R.H.'s own expressions were *I am certain the King will be better pleased with me when I return* ; and I dare add that it would be the greatest ambition of my life to contribute to so desirable an event. I waive entering into any further detail of that important concern, until I shall have learnt your pleasure concerning it.

" I have too great confidence in the indulgence of a Royal Master to apprehend any displeasure from the part I have ventured to act in so very delicate a position, and I trust that you will do justice to the motives which have prompted me to venture thus far without previous orders."

This letter was marked " Shewn to the King."

It is interesting to trace the version which was sent to Mrs Fitzherbert.

The Emissary made a point of following the Prince whenever he saw him walking or riding alone. He referred to Mr Pitt's Administration to which the Prince replied that he was deeply averse to them as they slighted him upon every occasion. The Emissary threw out feelers and confessed his own admiration for Mr Pitt, followed by some fulsome flattery of the Prince which the Prince cut short. The Emissary acknowledged that he came from the First Minister and that there were two plans affecting the Prince's affairs, one arising from the Minister and one from the King. He hinted that Mr Pitt was not too pleased with the King and that naturally, looking in the direction of the rising sun, he would be glad to adopt any plan agreeable to the Prince. All this was solemnly related to " my dear Maria " by letter.

An interesting clause was the Minister's plan suggesting the Prince travelling abroad. With Mrs Fitzherbert on the Continent it was obvious that the best means of catching the Prince's interest was to manufacture reasons for him to reach the Continent as well.

## The Emissary

This plan had been vetoed by the King on the strength of a report that the Prince had wished to go abroad in order to marry an English Lady. The Royal plan was simply that the Prince should marry the daughter of the Prince of Orange and enjoy an augmented income "with a perfect clearing of all debts." At the same time the King was very anxious to know if the Prince was swayed by any other motives than he had given for foreign travel. For a moment the Prince visioned the wisdom of making a clean breast: "I mean candidly and openly, and with the spirit that becomes not only a gentleman, but a Man, and last of all of publicly assuring at least to my father the sentiments which I profess to my beloved wife and which I glory in, and which I told Thee, my Maria, thou shouldst one of these Days see me do; could I do better, can I, could I, ever enjoy a moment's happiness, a moment's joy, a moment's comfort without Thee. No, Thou art my Life, my Soul, my all, my everything. But enough! I will proceed . . ."

The Emissary, it appeared, took occasion to sound the Prince as intimately as he dared. The Prince continued: "The *Go-between* (a name I have coined just now) I was greatly surprised at seeing arrive two or three days after he desired to say a few words in private. I instantly complied with his request, and attended him into another Room. He then said he was commissioned to ask me should I wish to go abroad and if I did, whether any idea of a marriage with you was or would be my motive for travelling?"

The Prince replied that these were questions even his father had no right to put. The Emissary continued by asking a question so delicate that he invited the Prince to make a direct refusal to answer it. The Prince replied that such a question was "perfectly unhandsome and unfair" and that his only answer would be "that what was done in this affair could not

## Mrs Fitzherbert

be undone." Whatever this question exactly was, it must have touched Mrs Fitzherbert intimately and was put again on the following day. The Prince gave the same answer. His interrogator was certain that if he were not married at the moment he soon would be and would never marry any other woman but Mrs Fitzherbert. "This was said with a sort of interrogating look to which I bowed assent."

The Prince added that he had considered himself a married man for a year and a half, "ever since I made to Thee and Thou madest to me in the face of Heaven, a Vow mutually to regard one another as Man and Wife, and never to belong to anyone else but to each other, and which Vow thou hast so lately confirmed by the consent Thou hast given to become *mine*."

This must have been a rainbowed recollection of the stormy scene which took place in Carlton House at the Prince's bedside. She had since forwarded her renewed consent from abroad, whether by letter or by word of mouth in some faithful messenger or what the Prince liked to call by the word *Go-between*. The Prince assured Mrs Fitzherbert that the King had guessed their marriage and was likely to connive at it, in fact the King had graciously pronounced the words that "what was decreed in Heaven could not be subverted on Earth."

The Prince believed he had private authority for believing that the King was willing to acknowledge Mrs Fitzherbert as his wife, if the Prince made over his succession to the Kingdom of Hanover to the King's favourite son, the Duke of York. By German Law, only the issue of a German Princess could succeed to Hanover and therefore "my children, if I have any by my Marriage with You, cannot succeed after my demise."

It could not have been a great sacrifice to part with Hanover, but the Prince felt overjoyed at the prospect

## The Plan for Holland

of exchanging a German Kingdom for an English wife. "I shall instantly subscribe to those terms, after having that is to say proper assurances respecting You, for there is no sacrifice, *my beloved Wife*, that I have not, and will not make for Thee. Thou art a Treasure to me, I never can part with, and I never can go too far to testify that Love which can never end but with my Life."

Joyous in these hopes, which must have had but the slightest warranty on the part of the King, the Prince arranged to marry Mrs Fitzherbert in Holland two years hence when he had attained the age of twenty-five. He sent for Mr Errington and they met half-way upon the road between Red Rice, in Hampshire, and London. "I then explained to him that from the inquiries I had made, to be sure we might be married two years hence in Holland when I am twenty-five years of age, but then your situation would be just the same here or there as if married in England, and therefore a marriage in England, witnessed and attested in the manner I will inform you of presently, was much more to be wished than a marriage abroad."

The Prince had already informed Mrs Fitzherbert's mother, and Mrs Fitzherbert added her intention in her last letter to Mrs Smythe. Mrs Fitzherbert now had hardly any excuse for declining to return. Her mother and uncle informed and apparently consenting, the King apparently guessing and conniving and with a possible recognition of the marriage in the future, what else could she do?

The Prince had communicated his situation to others besides Mrs Fitzherbert's family. He had been pleasantly indiscreet when supping with her friend, Lady Anne, whose opinion he had finally asked. Lady Anne replied that Mrs Fitzherbert had nothing else to do but to act exactly as the Prince desired her. "She said that gratitude alone to a man, who had made every



## Mrs Fitzherbert

sacrifice upon earth for you and would, if there had been as many more, have made them all to you, would make you act in the manner I wished."

The Prince had continually consulted the Duke and Duchess of Cumberland, and Mrs Fitzherbert was led to believe that they would actually postpone their departure "in order to give a sanction by their presence to our happy though secret union. Everything will be done as private as possible. No one else besides the Duke and Duchess will be present unless it is the Duke and Duchess of Devonshire. In short, everything is settled. We want nothing but your arrival."

"Lady Anne," who, it may be added, must have been Lady Anne Barnard, was the Lady who wrote the famous Ballad, "Auld Robin Gray," because the words generally sung to the tune, like many Caledonian lays, were unfit to pass a lady's lips. Louisa Lady Waterford once told Augustus Hare: "My great-aunt, Lady Anne Barnard, wrote a book very like your *Family Memoirs*, only hers was too imaginative. She was very intimate with Mrs Fitzherbert and describes all her first meetings with George IV and the marriage, and then she went with her on her famous expedition to Paris."<sup>1</sup>

The return of Mrs Fitzherbert must have followed in a few days, but the ceremony was not performed so speedily as the Prince hoped. History does not record the exact day of her return nor whether the Prince met her in a Hackney Chaise, as he proposed, between Rochester and London, or whether he awaited her arrival in her house at Park Street: "to which place I shall fly upon the Wings of Love, the moment I know you are come. I think I had better come into the House the back way through the Stables and the Garden, you know the way I mean."

His final instruction to her was to arrive early in the

<sup>1</sup> *The Story of My Life*: Augustus Hare.

## The Terms Accepted

evening, but not until it was dark. In the meantime he sent her a miniature representing his Eye, hoping she had not forgotten the whole countenance. He concluded this most massive of missives on the forty-second page: "Come then, oh come, dearest of Wives, best and most sacred of women, come and for ever crown with bliss him who will through Life endeavour to convince you by his love and attention of his wishes to be the best of Husbands, and who will ever remain unto the latest moments of his existence

*unalterably Thine."*

Mrs Fitzherbert was by now convinced, and accepted the terms he offered without inquiring too carefully into the legal position she was likely to hold in the future.

He gave her his word as a Christian Prince that he would marry her. All he demanded was that she should keep the marriage a secret as long as he lived. She trusted to his honour and agreed to return to England. She was not a saint or she would have entered a convent rather than endanger the prospects of her future Sovereign and even bring her own Faith into jeopardy in England. At no time was England ready to stand a Catholic mistress, much less a Catholic wife, in relation to the Throne. It will be remembered that Nell Gwynn on a famous occasion saved herself from the attentions of the mob by thrusting her head out of the coach and assuring them that she was "the Protestant w——," in contrast to Louise de la Kerouaille, who was of the Apostolic Religion.

Mrs Fitzherbert may be pardoned. She had lived with two dull and excellent husbands. She had had no children and only began to enjoy Society with the freedom of her widowhood. For a year she had given up her friends and relations. She had an empty house in London and a villa on the River. It is a law almost

## Mrs Fitzherbert

of nature that the best and most honest of women are easiest attracted by the scamp and even by the rogue. George had principles, but no morals. It was the rollicking and desperate elements in him which undoubtedly appealed to her. To combine romance with marriage is offered to few women. To most they come from separate quarters. For a Catholic lady the combination was irresistible, and Mrs Fitzherbert returned to London early in December and awaited Fate in her house in Park Street.

Lord Glenbervie, son-in-law of Lord North, recorded some details of this historical return :

(August 13, 1802.) " Lady Glenbervie has just repeated to me the circumstances which convince her that the Prince of Wales is married to Mrs Fitzherbert. Mrs Fitzherbert had gone abroad with the declared purpose of remaining abroad two or three years. After she had been gone some time an Express arrived from the Prince on which she immediately determined to return and her arrival in London was fixed for a particular Tuesday. Sir Ralph Payne having invited H.R.H. to a ball at his house for that day, he took him by the hand, squeezed it and said that nothing on earth could induce him to accept any invitation on the day he expected Mrs Fitzherbert."<sup>1</sup>

The immediate difficulties lay before the Prince. It was necessary for him to inform a few friends and to find a clergyman sufficiently reckless to perform the ceremony. Mrs Fitzherbert had to find two witnesses of her own Religion who were willing to run the risk of committing a felony.

The Prince first applied to a military chaplain, Philip Rosenhagen, who left his papers to Sir Philip Francis. They were published in Sir Philip's correspondence in 1867. Rosenhagen refused because " he dare not betray the duty he owes to the Prince by assisting in

<sup>1</sup> *Glenbervie Diaries.*

## Parson Rosenhagen

an affair which might bring such serious consequences to him."

The consequences could be serious indeed. The Prince would forfeit the Throne and Parson Rosenhagen would be compelled to take up spiritual duties in Botany Bay. It was high treason to wed or cause to wed the heir to the Throne.

In any case Rosenhagen was well out of it and a more reputable agent was sought in Parson Johnes Knight, who forty-five years later wrote an account, of which Miss Jervis (Lady Forester) kept a copy among her papers. It was written three months after the death of George IV from Henley Hall, in Shropshire (September 28, 1830), at the request of his daughter, Lady Shelley:

"In the month of December, 1785, Mr Johnes was staying with Lord North at Bushey Park, no one was there but his own family—they were one evening playing at some round game when about 9 o'clock a letter was brought to Mr. Johnes from the Prince, commanding him to come directly to a supper at Carlton House. By Lord North's advice he instantly set off for London—it appears his Lordship thought that something further was intended than a mere supper since Lady Glenbervie told Mr Johnes her Father desired they would never mention that letter of the Prince.—On arriving at Carlton House a letter was delivered to Mr Johnes by Edward Bouverie to say that the party was put off and that the Prince expected to see him at an early hour next day. It being then 11 o'clock, Mr Johnes proceeded to the Mount Coffee House in Lower Grosvenor Street to get some supper—here he chanced to meet with Colonel Lake, created Lord Lake, and they supped together. In the course of conversation they spoke of the Prince's attachment to Mrs Fitzherbert and Col Lake said he was almost certain the Prince intended to marry her, but he trusted no clergyman would be found to perform the

## Mrs Fitzherbert

ceremony—to this Mr Johnes cordially agreed, and he went home to his Mother's at Stratford Place.

“ Next day he was admitted to the Prince's dressing-room at Carlton House, and the Prince very soon came to him in his dressing gown, apparently just got out of bed.—He began by apologising for bringing him from Bushey Park, and then in his own persuasive language detailed his long love for Mrs Fitzherbert, the misery he had endured, the taunts he had received from the King in consequence of its having been suspected that he had in the preceding Summer gone from Brighton to the French Coast to visit her, and he then drew up his shirt and shewed a scar in his side caused as he, the Prince, said by his falling on his sword that he might end his life with his hopeless love.—The Prince then spoke of his determination to repeal the Royal Marriage Act the instant he came to the Throne which Mr Johnes adds ‘ which by the bye has never yet been done.’ In conclusion the Prince begged Mr Johnes if he really was attached to him to perform the marriage ceremony between him and Mrs Fitzherbert.

“ Mr Johnes says he used every argument he could think of to dissuade him in vain, at last he said if you refuse I will find another clergyman who will—this made Mr Johnes apprehensive that he would find someone to marry him for the sake of Church preferment, and then for a larger bribe that he would betray the Prince's secrets to Mr Pitt then Prime Minister.—*This* made him unable to resist his importunities, and he could not bear to see him so unhappy, ‘ *for at that time,*’ he esteemed the Prince, ‘ *notwithstanding the difference of their rank,*’ with all the warmth of equality in friendship—Mr Johnes says of him—‘ his tact was so nice that he never failed in the most minute circumstance which he supposed might captivate those whom he for the present hour chose to associate.’

“ Mr Johnes having agreed, the Prince said that on a certain day Mr Johnes should be walking between 7 and 8 o'clock in the evening at the upper end of Park Lane near Hereford Street, where Mrs Fitz-

## Mr Johnes has Difficulties

herbert then lived, and that a person should be ready to introduce him into her house. Mr Johnes understood from the Prince that the only persons who would attend the wedding were *his friends* the late Duke of Devonshire and his first Duchess the sister of Lord Spencer. Mr Johnes then left Carlton House after having had thanks showered upon him. He walked home full of the important business and of the serious results he was bringing upon himself—yet without the slightest inclination to draw back, when his last night's conversation with Lord Lake flashed upon him.

“Mr Johnes had the highest opinion and said he ever should have of the honour and integrity of the late Lord Lake. He knew him to be sincerely attached to the Prince, and he would not have forfeited his good opinion for all the world. He was now he says completely wretched and as a last resource himself wrote the most affecting letter he could to the Prince, stating that ‘before he saw him he had promised to one person that nothing should induce him to marry the Prince to Mrs Fitzherbert’—that he had resolved to take every punishment and loss he might have brought on himself, but the loss of honour he could not endure. He named that in the heat of conversation he had truly forgotten his promise, and finally he conjured the Prince to allow him to decline the marriage ceremony. The Prince directly sent him a kind answer releasing him from his engagement and ordering Mr Johnes to wait on him at Col Gardiner's house in Queen Street and that Col Gardiner (uncle to the late Lord Blessington) would call for him in Stratford Place.

“During the walk to Queen Street Col Gardiner said it was a pity Mr Johnes had not recollected his promise before he allowed the Prince to confide in him.—Mr Johnes expressed his sorrow and his excuse on account of the agitation of the moment. The Prince had already arrived at Col Gardiner's—he shook hands with Mr Johnes and at the same time said

## Mrs Fitzherbert

'if he had not let me off, he Mr Johnes must inevitably have fled from England,' to which Royal logic Mr Johnes joyfully assented, but did not understand how his conforming to the law must be necessarily followed by his being banished. The Prince said he was sure he knew the name of the friend who had bound Mr Johnes, meaning Lord North, but without mentioning his name; Mr Johnes naturally declined to name the friend—they then separated—Mr Johnes instantly destroyed the Prince's letter and never till the death of George the Fourth mentioned this business to anyone, neither did he tell Lord Lake when he returned from India, when this tale was out of date, *what he had suffered not to lose his friendship.*

"Mr Johnes adds that he is firmly convinced the Prince was married to Mrs Fitzherbert and that all English Roman Catholics considered her the legal wife of George the Fourth. Mr Johnes is inclined to think that when the Prince named to her his having declined to perform the ceremony that he forgot to tell her his strict sense of honour prevented him.<sup>1</sup> He writes full of enthusiasm about her whom he styles 'that ill-used Lady' and that she was truly and honestly attached to her Royal husband, never enriched herself or spoke ill of any human being—she was always intent on his showing himself frequently among those who were destined to be his subjects.

"She lived honoured and respected without guile, without deceit, and without that most odious vice of avarice—happy had it been for this forsaken Lady had she never been the object of Princely love, and a thousand times happier had it been for the Prince had he never deserted her for the dear-bought smiles of her unworthy successor."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Lady Shelley told me that Mrs Fitzherbert never spoke to her father after this, but I am nearly positive that Mr Johnes told me that she did call him up to her long afterwards when she was driving through one of the streets of London; I think it was South Audley Street." (Note by Lady Forester.)

<sup>2</sup> "Mrs Fitzherbert's brother, Mr Wat Smythe, was a true and valued friend of my father's—he was *much* against his sister's marriage with the Prince of Wales, and there was no great intimacy

## The Marriage

Lord Brougham in after years interviewed Mr Johnes at Bocket Hall and produced another version :

“ Johnes had been one of the Prince’s friends and had promised to perform the ceremony ; but as he was walking home from Carlton House, he recollected having some time before given Admiral Payne his promise not to do so, the Admiral being anxious to throw all the obstacles he could in the way of what he knew was intended. So the next morning he returned to Pall Mall, saw the Prince, and informed him of his previous promise and refused to break it. The Prince never forgave him, nor for many years did Mrs Fitzherbert ; but she afterwards was good-natured about it and forgave him.”

Admiral Payne was not the man to stand in the way of any desire of the Prince.

Eventually a clergyman was found, the Rev. Robert Burt, who, according to tradition, was bailed out of the Fleet Prison, his debts to the amount of £500 were paid, and he was himself promised a Bishopric, if he would perform the marriage service. Mr Burt’s name would have been forgotten, had he not confessed his act on his deathbed in 1791. He died, aged 35, without having attained his spiritual ambitions. “ October 8, 1795. From Burton I learnt that the Rev Mr Burt, of Twickenham, actually married the Prince of Wales to Mrs Fitzherbert and received £500 for doing it as he himself declared to his family on his deathbed.”<sup>1</sup> His memorial tablet is in the church of St Mary Hoo at Rochester. Cobbett’s *Memorials of Twickenham* record :

“ The Rev Robert Burt L.L.B. Vicar of Twicken-  
between them in consequence. Mrs Fitzherbert was, however, very kind to his daughters, the Miss Smythes (afterwards Lady Hervey Bathurst and the Duchess de la Force), who were much with her after the death of her brother.” (Note by Lady Forester.) The Duchess de la Force was the Hon. Mrs George Craven by her first marriage.”  
—*Jervis Papers.*

<sup>1</sup> *Lord Colchester’s Diaries.*



## Mrs Fitzherbert

ham 5 May, 1788. He was one of the Chaplains to H.R.H. the Prince of Wales. He died October 17, 1791 before he had completed his 31st year." [sic]

He was buried in the London Road Burial Ground on October 25.

Lord Stourton's account of the marriage is brief, but it was taken from Mrs Fitzherbert's mouth:

"Immediately after her return she was married to the Prince according to the rites of the Catholic Church<sup>1</sup> in this country; her uncle Harry Errington and her brother Jack Smythie being witnesses to the contract, along with the Protestant clergyman who officiated at the ceremony. No Roman Catholic priest officiated.<sup>2</sup> A certificate of the marriage is extant in the handwriting of the Prince and with his signature, and that of Mary Fitzherbert. The witnesses' names were added; but at the earnest request of the parties, in a time of danger, they were afterwards cut out by Mrs Fitzherbert herself, with her own scissors, to save them from the peril of the Law.

"This she afterwards regretted; but a letter of the Prince on her return to him, has been preserved to supply any deficiency, in which he thanks God, that the witnesses to their union were still living; and moreover, the letter of the officiating clergyman is still preserved, together with another document with the signature and seal, but not in the handwriting of the Prince, in which he repeatedly terms her his wife."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This means not against Catholic sanction, although the minister was Anglican.

<sup>2</sup> A number of priests were at different times given this credit. Dr R. R. Madden, in his *Memoirs*, names the celebrated Abbé Campbell, Chaplain of the Neapolitan Embassy in London, as "the clergyman by whom the Prince Regent's marriage with Mrs Fitzherbert had been solemnised." The Abbé may have given rise to the rumour owing to his fondness of vaunting his intercourse with Princes. It is stated in Lord Cloncurry's *Recollections* that the "Abbé Taylor, head of the Irish Monastery of St. Isidore, was generally supposed to be the priest who married George IV to Mrs Fitzherbert."

<sup>3</sup> If this refers to the Prince's Will written in 1796, it is written throughout in his script and remains at Windsor.

## The Marriage

The actual marriage was performed in the greatest secrecy. The Prince arrived after dusk on foot with one attendant, believed to be Orlando Bridgeman, who became first Earl of Bradford. Behind locked doors George Prince of Wales and Maria Fitzherbert knelt and exchanged vows according to the Marriage ceremony of the Church of England which made the marriage valid in Catholic eyes, since the decrees of the Council of Trent regulating the marriages of Roman Catholics had never been proclaimed in England.

There was no canonical impediment. No indignant *officer of the Crown* appeared to forbid the Banns or recite why they should "not be coupled together in matrimony." Legal impediments there certainly were of no light description, such as the Act of Settlement and the Royal Marriage Act. But to thwarted lovers and romantic widows, what are these?

The ceremony concluded, the Prince very obligingly wrote out a certificate in his celebrated handwriting, gave it to the two witnesses to sign, and after signing it himself presented it to his wife to sign and to keep to her dying day.

"We the undersigned do witness that George Augustus Frederick, Prince of Wales, was married unto Maria Fitzherbert, this 15th of December, 1785.

JOHN SMYTHE<sup>1</sup>

HENRY ERRINGTON<sup>1</sup>

GEORGE P.

MARIA FITZHERBERT."

The validity or reality of Mrs Fitzherbert's marriage has been extensively discussed. It satisfied her conscience, though probably it would not have satisfied the Keeper of the King's, the Lord Chancellor. In latter years it was declared valid by the Pope, but it could never have passed the scrutiny of the English Law.

<sup>1</sup> The names of the witnesses are now scissored out.

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It was clandestine. It was irregular. It was illegal. It was a defiance of the Act of Settlement in that the bride was a Roman Catholic. It was an infringement of the Royal Marriage Act in that the consent of the Sovereign had not been asked.

Admitting its total invalidity under English Law, there is no reason for any worry on the part of sticklers for the Constitution. Such a marriage, however permissible in the opinion of the Pope, was non-existent, not even morganatic, under English Law. Whether the Prince forfeited the Throne, by passing through a ceremony, which at heart he knew was legally null and void, is a matter of argument and opinion. Mrs Fitzherbert had been of "more danger to her own peace than to that of either Church or State," as Tom Moore wrote in his *Life of Sheridan*.

As the historian, J. H. Jesse, put it, "the marriage would not have been a valid one and their children would, to all worldly effects and purposes, have been illegitimate." But even had there been any children from the marriage, there need have been no difficulty. To Mrs Fitzherbert they would have been born in holy wedlock, and the approval of her marriage by the Pope made them legitimate in Canon Law. To the Law of England they would be as null and void as the ceremony under whose auspices they were produced. It would be inaccurate to describe them as illegitimate, but they would certainly be illegal. The Church only required the consent of their parents to each other to have been freely given. The Law, in addition, required the consent of the Sovereign and this was totally lacking.

Lord Lothian wrote to the Duke of Rutland in Ireland (March 14, 1786):

"You ask my opinion respecting the Prince's marriage. I think it has all the appearance of its being true. I believe when he has been spoke to about it he has always been violent and I cannot find out that he

## The Marriage

has denied it peremptorily. He has said to one of the most intimate in his family when asked upon the subject, that he might answer, if asked the question, in the negative. But surely a report of the sort, was it not true, should be publicly contradicted and I am amazed that some member of Parliament has not mentioned it and I confess I am one of the number. Though I dined alone with him and you know the general topic of his conversation about women, he never mentioned her to me amongst others. I am very sorry for it, as it does him infinite mischief, particularly amongst the trading and lower class of people and if true must ruin him in every light.”<sup>1</sup>

Robert Hobart wrote full of humour, bias, and gossiping venom to the Duke of Rutland in Ireland (December 28, 1785):

“The town still talk of the Prince of Wales’ marriage. He has taken a Box for Mrs Fitzherbert at the Opera, and constantly passes the greater part of the night with her. I do not hear of Prince Carnaby’s<sup>2</sup> being yet arrived in Town. Wat Smythe appears already much elated with the honor that is intended or rather the dishonor which has already attended his family. H.R.H.’s new establishment is not yet named but no doubt the Marchioness of Buckingham<sup>3</sup> will be first Lady of the Bedchamber and her aunt Peg Nugent<sup>4</sup> necessary woman. If pride, arrogance and self-sufficiency be qualities for a Popish Minister,<sup>5</sup> the Noble Marquis himself by embracing that religion which he appeared to encourage in his wife, may be at the head of the Papistical Court.”<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Rutland Papers*.

<sup>2</sup> Sir Carnaby Haggerston married Mrs Fitzherbert’s sister.

<sup>3</sup> The second Earl of Buckingham, Irish Viceroy, married Caroline Connolly. She was a Catholic convert.

<sup>4</sup> Margaret Nugent, widow of the fifth Earl of Westmeath, was an Italian Catholic (daughter of Count Molza). The Earl, her son, conformed to the State Church.

<sup>5</sup> The Prince’s lifelong view of the Catholic religion was that it was the only religion fit for a gentleman, and he said so to Mrs St John (February 4, 1811): “My God, it is my opinion, and I do not care who knows it!”

<sup>6</sup> *Rutland Papers*.

## CHAPTER III

"But even here my fears, alarm, and my suspicions terrify me. Ah, Prince! What security can I henceforth receive that my confidence in the continuance of your affection is built on a more solid foundation than were my delusive expectations of royal greatness?"—*Marcellus and Julia: a contemporary novel*, 1788.

"The Errors of Kings are the Secrets of the State."—CARDINAL DUBOIS.

THE consent of the Sovereign to any marriage of descendants "of the Body of his late Majesty George II" was required by a recent Act of Parliament, amusingly described as one "for the better Regulation of the Hearts of Princes." It arose from George III's anger at the secret marriages which had been made by his brothers, the Dukes of Gloucester and Cumberland. They had married grand ladies and their children could be in the succession to the Throne. In the immediate pedigree of each dame there was, however, a serious illegitimacy. The Duke of Gloucester had married the illegitimate daughter of Sir Edward Walpole, while the Duke of Cumberland married Anne Horton, widow, daughter of the first Earl of Carhampton.

Mrs Horton's father was an illegitimate son of Colonel Henry Luttrell, an historic rogue in Irish History, who had betrayed his Prince at the Battle of Aughrim, obtained the estate of Luttrellstown, and begotten two sons by his housekeeper. When one of the grandsons (Lord Ingham later) stood for Middlesex in the famous Election of 1769 against John Wilkes, the Electors received a startling Tract from Ireland by which they could judge their Member's pedigree. The old Colonel had refused to marry his mistress or

## The Royal Marriage Act

write a will in her favour. He was shot on his way home from a Privy Council by hirelings: "the Colonel died before he could be got into his house, but this did not prevent the lady's nuptials, and immediately after that ceremony Mr Slingsby (a lawyer) took the Colonel's cold hand in his own and subscribed the Colonel's name: thus in the course of a few minutes the lady became an honest, virtuous lady and unblemished wife." She went into mourning and offered a reward for apprehending the murderers.<sup>1</sup>

One sister, Anne, married Mr Horton, a Derbyshire gentleman, and another, Elizabeth, was convicted abroad as a pickpocket according to the *Compleat Peerage*, which remarks that "they seem to have been an unlovely race."

Whatever were the blots on the "infamous Luttrells," as Horace Walpole called them, they did not trouble Mr Horton or Henry Frederick Duke of Cumberland, who married Mr Horton's widow in her own house in Hertford Street (October 2, 1771). From Calais the Duke wrote to announce his marriage to the King, who forbade the Cumberlands coming to Court and appealed to his Ministers to prevent such deplorable happenings in the future. The marriage was legal, as the Royal Family had been specially excluded from Lord Hardwicke's Marriage Act against such clandestine unions by the action of the King himself. Finding himself hoist by his own petard, His Majesty determined to keep the marrying desires of his family in check. The Royal Marriage Act passed both Houses of Parliament in March, 1772.

The Act was simple. Descendants of George II needed the Royal consent under the Great Seal to marry until the age of twenty-five, when they were required to give a year's notice to the Privy Council. They could then marry unless both Houses disapproved.

<sup>1</sup> *Life and History of Simon Lord Irnham.*

## Mrs Fitzherbert

The Duke of Gloucester had honoured another widow, the Lady Waldegrave, with his attentions in 1764, but she was too great a person to accept them without bridals. Her grandfather was Sir Robert Walpole, and her uncle, Horace Walpole, dictated the famous letter in which she informed the Duke that "every reason of honour and prudence oblige me to put an immediate end to a correspondence which would bring disgrace either on Your Royal Highness or on me."

By 1766 she had thought otherwise and they were secretly married. Unlike the Cumberlands the Gloucesters had two children, who passed into possible succession to the Throne despite the fact that their grandmother, Mary Clement, had been a milliner's apprentice. The marriage was kept more or less secret, but with the passing of the Royal Marriage Act the Duke gallantly proclaimed his state to the King, who sent the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Lord Chancellor, and the Bishop of London to inquire into the legality of the marriage. Although there had been no witnesses, the ceremony as performed by the Rev Dr Norton was found sufficient. The King was much disturbed at the idea of finding bastardy in his sister-in-law and it was found convenient for the happy couple to pass into exile. When they returned, she was allowed to live in the Inner Court of Hampton Court Palace. She withdrew when she was not allowed to enjoy "the Grand Entries" and drive her coach into the Palace like regular members of the Royal Family. When the Royal brothers married Commoners, the sentries were withdrawn from their doors as though the safety of the Dukes or the virtue of their wives were no longer a national concern.

Mrs Fitzherbert's name and descent were respectable in comparison with these Duchesses, but no pleading could have made Mrs Fitzherbert's marriage valid in English Law.

## Lady Waldegrave's Marriage

There was no difficulty in the eyes of Rome. The Decrees of the Council of Trent were never published in England and the old Canon Law continued to prevail, according to which the ministers to a marriage were the parties concerned and not the priest. The person of the clergyman, whether Catholic or Protestant, was of no consequence. He was the witness on the part of the State to Mrs Fitzherbert and on the part of the State Church to the Prince. For this reason Mrs Fitzherbert and her relations were satisfied in spite of the absence of a priest.

Comparison between the marriages of the Royal Dukes with that of their Royal nephew is natural. The validity of both the ducal marriages was recorded in Council. Lady Waldegrave's had the more similarity to Mrs Fitzherbert's. It was kept secret, but it was guessed by her family because she remained in religious Communion with the Anglican Church. She confessed her marriage to her brother-in-law, the Bishop of Exeter,<sup>1</sup> much as Mrs Fitzherbert communicated hers later to the Pope. Like Mrs Fitzherbert, she had promised not to reveal the secret and burst forth: "Good God, what have I done? I have betrayed the Duke and broken my promise to him of never owning the marriage without his leave." The Bishop kept the seal, but with the Duke's leave she informed her father, Sir Edward Walpole, in one of the most perfectly composed letters in the language (May 19, 1772). Several sentences might have been used by Mrs Fitzherbert when her turn came.

"To secure my character without injuring his, is the utmost of my wishes, and I dare say that you and all my relations will agree with me that I shall be much happier to be called Lady Waldegrave and respected as the Duchess of Gloucester than to feel myself the

<sup>1</sup> The Hon. Frederick Keppel married Laura, another illegitimate daughter of Sir Edward Walpole.



## Mrs Fitzherbert

cause of his leading such a life as his brother the Duke of Cumberland does, in order for me to be called Your Royal Highness. I am prepared for the sort of abuse the newspapers will be full of. Very few will believe that a woman will refuse to be called Princess if it is in her power. To have the power is my pride, and not using it in some measure pays the debt I owe the Duke for the honour he has done me. All that I wish of my relations is that they will show the world that they are satisfied with my conduct, yet seem to disguise the reason."

In every way the Prince of Wales' marriage was on a matrimonial par with those of the Royal Dukes. It was only the religion of the lady which made secrecy so imperative in his case that it could never be revealed to the King or to the prying eyes of Parliament or Council.

The Gloucesters had met Mrs Fitzherbert abroad and the Duke wrote to the Prince: "I am rejoiced at having had it in my power to show her any attention, especially, Sir, as it has met with your approbation."<sup>1</sup>

And in the year following the Prince's marriage the Duke wrote recalling how:

"Her own amiable character and knowing how much you was attached to her made me very happy to shew every possible civility. I felt myself particularly called on some *unfortunate occasions* to give her every public mark of attention, also trying to make her long exile as bearable as I could. I cannot express how much she made our little society comfortable by her friendly and constant good-humoured behaviour." And later: "I see a fair lady has been entertaining you with several curious anecdotes. I have seen so much of her that I think I can with truth say she has few like her. I am convinced she loves you far beyond herself."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Windsor Archives.*

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

## A Letter from Fox

Prince and Dukes all felt themselves in the same matrimonial boat. The Prince constantly visited the Cumberlands against the King's will, and when Mrs Fitzherbert's position was rudely challenged, both the Duchesses called upon her and showed their sympathy for a position which was not unlike their own.

Mary Frampton wrote in her 1785 *Journal*:

"At this time the connection of Mrs Fitzherbert with the Prince of Wales had not long existed. She held out long against him and went on the Continent and did not consent until a marriage ceremony had been performed. She ought however to have been sensible that the ceremony in the eye of the English Law was perfectly nugatory. Mrs Fitzherbert had known my mother well when she lived in Dorsetshire having been first of all married when very young to Mr Weld of Lulworth Castle, a neighbour of ours. She was then very beautiful. She dined at Moreton on the day she was eighteen, perfectly unaffected and unassuming in her manners, as I have heard from my mother at that time and I have myself since seen. Her husband dying very soon after this, my father and mother knowing Mrs Weld to be so young and without any friend with her sent to offer her any comfort or assistance in their power. This friendly conduct was on her side always repaid with great civility and attention."

Fox wrote to the Prince a letter of which the first pages are missing, but concluding (August 8, 1784):

... "Your Royal Highness' confidence and assuring you that when I know your *real* views you shall not find in me a troublesome adviser but a friend, if I may presume to use such an expression, ready to render you any service consistent with his real attachment to you and who where he cannot serve will certainly never betray you. I have the honour to be with every sentiment of respect and gratitude, Sir, your most dutiful servant C. J. Fox."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Mrs Dawson-Damer's Autograph Book.*

## Mrs Fitzherbert

Mrs Fitzherbert's scruples proved dangerous to Fox's personal ambitions. The Prince was the Prince of the Whigs, and supposing that he forfeited the Throne? Who would one day recall the Whigs to Office? Who would make Fox Premier?

A few days before her marriage Fox wrote a famous but unavailing letter to the Prince (December 10, 1785): "I was told just before I left town yesterday, that Mrs Fitzherbert was arrived . . . but I was told at the same time that there was reason to suppose that you were going to take the very desperate step (pardon the expression) of marrying her at this moment."

Poor Fox wished that her conversion to the Church of England could at least be proclaimed. "In all these circumstances your enemies might take such advantage as I shudder to think of; and though your generosity might think no sacrifices too great to be made to a person whom you love so entirely, consider what her reflections must be in such an event, and how impossible it would be for her ever to forgive herself."

Finally, he added a clause which Lord John Russell in his *Life of Fox* preferred to omit. It certainly touched the core of the difficulty: "If I were Mrs Fitzherbert's father or brother, I would advise her not by any means to agree to it and to prefer any other species of connection with you to one leading to so much misery and mischief."<sup>1</sup>

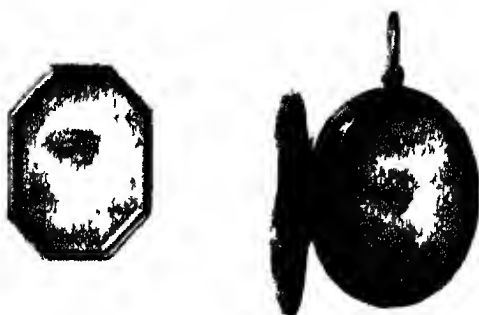
The Prince was hard-driven, but his answer showed that he thought Mrs Fitzherbert was worth lying for (December 11, 1785): "Make yourself easy, my dear friend. Believe me, the world will soon be convinced that there not only is, but never was, any ground for these reports, which of late have so malevolently circulated."

The Prince had not mentioned Mrs Fitzherbert in his letter, but Fox took his general sentences for a denial

<sup>1</sup> Lord Holland: *Memoirs of the Whig Party*.



MINIATURE OF THE PRINCE OF WALES BY COSWAY



LOCKETS CONTAINING PICTURES OF THE EYES  
OF MRS FITZHERBERT AND THE PRINCE OF  
WALES BY COSWAY

By kind permission of the Earl of Portarlington



## Honeymoon at Richmond

which led to serious results. It was Fox who later denied the marriage when it was debated in the House of Commons.

Fox's proposal could hardly be approved by moralists, and Lord John Russell added: "it must be confessed that Mr Fox and his friends were not at all more scrupulous on this head than Henry IV of France, Charles II, the Duke of Grafton, Lord Sandwich, and other statesmen of the preceding age."

Meantime the happy couple honeymooned, we are told, at Mrs Fitzherbert's own villa at Richmond, wherever it exactly lay. Their carriage broke down on the way at Twickenham. There is on Ham Common a claimant for the scene of their honeymoon in Ormeley Lodge, a beautiful old villa with the Prince of Wales' feathers carved in the brick above the entrance. They returned to London for Christmas. Gossip was already rampant.

Sir Gilbert Elliot wrote to his wife before the New Year that "the report is that Mrs Fitzherbert is or is to be at Carlton House; that she was married by a Roman Catholic priest, is to have £6000 a year, and is to be created a Duchess."

Other Duchesses were feeling troubled on the point of accompanying Mrs Fitzherbert to the Opera. The Countess Spencer wrote to the Duchess of Devonshire (February 6, 1786):

"What will you do about going to the Opera with Mrs Fitzherbert? I wish it could be avoided for it is certainly very plain that both he and she mean to shew they are not upon the same footing they were. She cannot be his wife. What then is she? Why does a private gentlewoman take every subscription in her box at the Opera to herself, why does she change from a very prudent behaviour about him to a very imprudent one, suffering him to sit and talk to her all the Opera, to carry her picture (or her Eye), which is the

## Mrs Fitzherbert

same thing, about and shew it to people, letting his carriage be constantly seen at her door especially in a morning to carry him home. All these things put it past a doubt that they are married, but in what light do you mean to appear? Will you go about with his Mistress or do you mean to countenance and support such a Marriage? At all events how much better it will be for you to stay out of Town till people are grown more accustomed to the thing, and till some respectable people, if any such will do it, have set you an example. The Duchess of Portland has asked the Duke what she must say if the Prince was to make her any request about it and he has charged her at all events to decline and if that will not do to refuse it, as she can upon no grounds, countenance and support such a connection. As yet no body but Lady Beauchamp<sup>1</sup> and Lady Broughton<sup>2</sup> have been with her and these cannot be examples to follow. . . ."<sup>3</sup>

The Duchess Georgiana answered Lady Spencer (February 7, 1786) :

"As to Mrs Fitzherbert I will never go to the Opera with her. I never did and never will and she knows it. What I mean to do is this. I knew that her intentions once were perfectly honourable and prudent. Seeing another turn had taken place, I strongly dissuaded him from his ideas and I declare I do not know that anything has taken place. She encourages him you say in public and she receives his visits. I search into nothing and only wish to keep entirely out of it. I shall leave my name with her and if I have a large assembly ask her, because Mrs Fitzherbert, an unmarried woman suffering the visits of an unmarried man is no reason for not being civil to her, but this is all I will do and I will avoid the assembly if you like it and indeed from my own choice I shall not have one, and only mentioned the possibility of carrying my utmost civility so far. . . ."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Wife of the second Marquess of Hertford.

<sup>2</sup> Wife of the Rev Sir Thomas Broughton, sixth Bart.

<sup>3</sup> *Chatsworth Papers.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

## The Spread of Rumour

Rumours were bound to slip into Horace Walpole's letters. How could it be otherwise with one who might have been described as the literary son of Madame de Sévigné by Doctor Johnson? To Sir Horace Mann abroad he scribbled (February 13, 1786):

"Were rumour, aye much more than rumour, every voice in England to be credited, the matter somehow or other reaches even from London to Rome. I know nothing but the buzz of the day, nor can say more upon it: if I send you a riddle, fame or echo from so many voices will soon reach you and explain the enigma: though I hope it is essentially void of truth and that appearances rise from a much more common cause."

In other words he hoped like all loyal subjects that there was a *liaison* and not a marriage, for a marriage would have rocked the Throne if not a cradle.

The Gillray caricatures deserve a paragraph of their own. They began in the Spring with "The Follies of a Day or the Marriage of Figaro," in which the Prince wedded Mrs Fitzherbert with a ring, while his three feathers floated over her head-dress. Burke appeared as officiating clergyman reading the service from a copy of Hoyle's Games! (March 13, 1786.) A week later appeared "The Royal Toast: Fat, fair, and forty," though she was then four months short of thirty: and "'Twas Nobody saw the Lovers Leap." Fox was represented as the Nobody encouraging the Prince to leap the Broomstick with Mrs Fitzherbert. April 1 naturally saw "The April Fool or the Follies of a Night." The Prince was portrayed dancing with his lady while Burke played the music with the fire irons. On April 2 came "The Padlock or To be or not to be the Queen: that is the question." The pair were represented approaching Church chiefly at Mrs Fitzherbert's urging:

Oh fie, my dear! let's go unto the altar  
And then you know our conscience cannot falter.



## Mrs Fitzherbert

The Prince's economies were parodied by "The School for Scandal" in which Mrs Fitzherbert was knocked down as Lot Two in the famous picture sale. Incidentally, the caricaturist had seized on her aquiline nose as deftly as on the snub nose of the Queen. By May 9 appeared "The Prince's Nursery or Nine Months after," in which a baby was added to the scene. The baby *motif* was repeated in "Love's Last Shift" (February 26, 1787) showing them living in scenes of utter poverty.

For a year London seethed with the grand gossip. From the first the Prince insisted on giving her the position of honour. He would accept no invitations where she did not receive first place. Precedence had to be waived in her favour. "The Prince never forgot to go through the form of saying to Mrs Fitzherbert with the most respectful bow: 'Madam, may I be allowed the honour of seeing you home in my carriage?' "<sup>1</sup>

Lady Jerningham wrote (March 6, 1786):

"The Prince is very assiduous in attending her in all public places but she lives at her own house and he at his."<sup>2</sup>

Mrs Talbot wrote to Francis Fortescue Turville (March 17, 1786):

"Mrs Fitzherbert makes a good deal of talk. I make no doubt she is married to the Prince of Wales. He goes by my door every day at the same hour and seems very constant to her at present. It is said she is with child. After a while she will be a most unhappy woman."

Mrs Fitzherbert never lived at Carlton House, but rented a house in St James's Square. They pretended to live as bachelor and widow in the face of a world which they were prepared to mystify, but not to outrage.

<sup>1</sup> *Lady Charlotte Bury's Diary.*

<sup>2</sup> *Jerningham Letters.*

## The Catholic Attitude

The Catholics were puzzled and alarmed. Lady Jerningham wrote in the same letter :

“ Mrs Fitzherbert has, I believe, been married to the Prince. But it is a very hazardous undertaking, as there are two Acts of Parliament against the validity of such an alliance: concerning her being a subject and her being a Catholic. God knows how it will turn out—it may be to the glory of our Belief or it may be to the great dismay and destruction of it.”<sup>1</sup>

Thomas Orde wrote to the Duke of Rutland, then Lord Lieutenant in Ireland (May 16, 1786):

“ The reports about the Prince are full of contradictions. It is certain that many of the persons said to have been present were not there, and the clergyman, who is supposed to have performed the marriage ceremony has, as Lord S—— assures me, no share in it. The Prince denies the thing but has at the same time dropped hints of her belief in the connection and has wished therefore that their happiness might not be interrupted by conjectures and rumours. This however gives reason to imagine that some ceremony had passed. His Royal Highness was present at the marriage of Lady H—— W—— with Mr C—— and after the ceremony the Duchess of B—— unthinkingly turned to His Royal Highness and said that she supposed this to be the first marriage at which he had been present. The Prince assured Her Grace with great energy that it really was the first. The Duchess thereupon recollected her *faux pas* and was confounded.

“ The conduct of her friends is very different. Some of them see and countenance her. Others totally avoid her. The Haggerstons and Erringtons are among the first, and Lord Sefton among the latter. The Prince is very angry with the Duchess of Portland because the Duke will not suffer to receive Mrs Fitzherbert.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Jerningham Letters.*

<sup>2</sup> *Rutland Papers.*

## Mrs Fitzherbert

The Catholic party stood to lose rather than gain by this doubtful alliance unless Mrs Fitzherbert proved herself endowed with a heroic tact. If there had been no marriage, they presumably lost Mrs Fitzherbert from their fold. If there had been a marriage, there were terrible risks ahead.

Mrs Delany's Correspondence contains a letter written from her lodgings alluding to what the Indexer tactfully calls "alleged illegal nuptials" on the part of the Prince (February 18, 1786):

"London is very barren of news at present. The Prince of Wales' match engrosses most of the conversation; it is generally believed some ceremony has passed between them to satisfy the Lady's scruples."

The marriage need only have been gossip in the ranks of Society, but it had reached the political world as rumour and probability. When the Prince's debts came before Parliament, the judicious had their opportunity to probe the truth. Was the Prince of Wales married to a Roman Catholic?

The Prince lived extravagantly and caused Mrs Fitzherbert to live likewise. There was a quarter of a million of princely debts, and when the King required a few details in the Bill, a sum of £50,000 was discovered to have been devoted to Mrs Fitzherbert's establishment. The Prince met the King's anger with economies as dramatic as his expenditure. Carlton House was closed. His horses and carriages were sold and he retired to Brighton, where it must be confessed he lived in the same fantastic state, partly like a great Whig nobleman and partly like a Caliph in the Arabian Nights. He had built the "Marine Pavilion," which has been with the Crystal Palace and Euston Station the principal instance of imagination applied to architecture in England. Sydney Smith remarked that St Paul's Cathedral had come down to the seaside and

## The Pavilion

delivered the Dome of a litter. It corresponded to other buildings much as Mrs Fitzherbert's marriage compared with more conventional unions. It was quite unique and in the phrase the Primate later used of the marriage "decidedly odd."

There has been no other Pavilion in the History of Architecture. The word has been used for the Dwelling of God: "pavilioned in splendour." In modern days it has become attached to every humblest cricket ground, but in Georgian England it connoted one building only in the Realm, the amazing structure which London Dandies and Sussex fishermen watched slowly rising at Brighton.

Here Mrs Fitzherbert reigned as a Queen and entertained the Whigs and the friends of the Prince, at first living herself in a small house (now destroyed) beside his magnificent establishment. At Brighton the Prince improved in health and character. Under Mrs Fitzherbert's influence gaming and drinking were diminished to zero. The so-called "daughters of faro"<sup>1</sup> were kept at a distance. It is true that practical joking continued. The Delany Correspondence tells a story how a certain Mrs Lawrell found herself at a party one evening with the Prince, who asked her to fetch Mr Lawrell to supper. Mr Lawrell preferred to send the excuse that he had suddenly been taken ill. The Prince and his friends decided to take him at his word. They waited for midnight and then wrote to every physician and apothecary in Brighton to come to the dying Lawrell's assistance. Theodore Hook, the Prince of Hoax, would have enjoyed watching the distracted pair of Lawrells roused in their night attire to find their staircase filled by "the faculty arriving in shoals."

<sup>1</sup> It is not necessary to add the witticism that the patronesses of *Faro* (an illegal gambling game) often found their steps led them to Moses.

## Mrs Fitzherbert

Brighton became known owing to Mrs Fitzherbert and the Prince keeping company on its happy sands. The date of their auspicious entry was July 11, 1786. Under their influence a fishing village became a watering place for the Nobility: Gennesaret became Cæsarea.

The Prince's effect on Brighton was enormous. In the year 1783, on coming of age, he had paid a visit to his uncle, the Duke of Cumberland, then residing at Grove House on the Cliff near the Steyne: and the modern history of Brighton had begun. On August 2, 1784, the Prince drove a three-horse phaeton from Brighton to London and back in one day. "His Royal Highness went by way of Cuckfield and was only ten hours on the road, being four and a half going and five and a half returning."<sup>1</sup>

It was the Prince who started the craze for making records on the Brighton Road. Brighton became a town devoted to health and pleasure, leaving Bath and Cheltenham far behind. Pall Mall was translated to the Steyne. Fashion and Beauty were drawn in coach and chaise to the seaside. The rugged fisherfolk beheld Beaux and Dandies of the first water disporting themselves in the salubrious breeze. Exquisite but agreeably hidden feminine forms were exercised upon animals prettily described as "Jerusalem Ponies." The bathing chariot was invented to introduce British womanhood to the tidal levees of Neptune. A race of marine attendants was originated in order to submerge the thickly-apparelled bodies of the Aristocracy and that austere outdoor morality was imposed, which, thank God, has never left the beaches of Great Britain.

Rowlandson slipped down from Town to caricature the bathing and the horse-racing, in all of which the Prince joined with his bride. Shops and libraries sported the Royal Feathers of their patron. The

<sup>1</sup> *Parry's Historical Account of the Coast of Sussex.*

## A Letter from the Queen

Prince's Birthday made August 12 an annual excitement as brilliant as his father's birthday on succeeding Fourths of June at Eton. Mrs Fitzherbert became possessed of the letter written by the Queen congratulating the Prince on his first birthday (as it happened) as a married man. The Queen wrote (August 11, 1786):

" May it please Providence by His allwise directions to lead your heart in such a way as to be yourself the Disperser of every Cloud, which of late seems to have darkened every prospect which in the eyes of those who are attached to the King and his Family ought to be bright and cheerful. A late instance must have convinced you that as personal dislike is or can be lodged in the breast of the best of Kings and Fathers and it would have made every sincere friend of yours happy if after the proper step of coming to Windsor, you could have been persuaded to add that of seeing the King, particularly as he expressed himself to be ready to receive you. Nobody can more anxiously wish than I do the return of the days when all the family were united and when I am sure you were more happy than you are now."

This letter like others from the anxious King and Queen passed into Mrs Fitzherbert's Papers.

Nevertheless it would have been difficult to imagine the Prince or Mrs Fitzherbert happier than at this time.

Mary Frampton wrote of Mrs Fitzherbert in her Diary for 1786:

" She found out my mother's residence in London and called upon her to my great joy who of course wished to see a person so much talked about and who would certainly have been a much greater as well as happier woman could she have resisted the allurements of a Prince who however beyond all doubt possessed beauty, talents and the most enchanting manners. Can it, therefore, be wondered at, however much one

## Mrs Fitzherbert

may lament that human nature did not withstand the temptation held out! If ever the Prince loved any woman it was she: and half London, had he thrown his handkerchief, would have flown to pick it up. Mrs Fitzherbert's very uncomfortable life since her connection with the Prince affords as strong a lesson as ever was given in favour of virtue, for she never derived any benefit from it. When she came in to my mother's I thought her certainly very handsome, though too fat. A very mild benignant countenance without much animation and rather heavy than brilliant in conversation. Her chariot was without any armorial bearings nor has she ever worn any, since her liveries by accident resembled the Royal ones, the Fitzherbert livery being red turned up with green and she had gold ornaments."

And recalling Mrs Fitzherbert's state in the Capital :

"When Mrs Fitzherbert was living in Pall Mall within few doors of Carlton House, we were at one of the Assemblies she gave which was altogether the most splendid I was ever at. Attendants in green and gold besides the usual livery servants, were stationed in the rooms and up the staircase to announce the company and carry about refreshments. The house was new and beautifully furnished. One room was hung with puckered blue satin from which hangings the now common imitations in paper were taken. A whole length portrait of the Prince of Wales was conspicuous in one of the drawing rooms and his bust and that of the Duke of York ornamented the dining room. Her own manners ever remained quiet, civil and unperturbed and in the days of her greatest influence she was never accused of using it improperly."

Life in London or at Brighton must have been a continual delight for Mrs Fitzherbert. She met every literary and political figure on the Whig side: Burke and Sheridan, to say nothing of Beau Brummell and scores of the bright society of the day.

## Beau Brummell

Mrs Fitzherbert's acquaintance with Brummell was brief. The Beau attributed his severance from the Prince to his own sharp sayings at Mrs Fitzherbert's expense. The porter at Carlton House was called "Big Ben," a name which Brummell transferred to the Prince. By another flight of metaphor he alluded to Mrs Fitzherbert as "Benina." After Brummell had ventured to call for "*Mistress Fitzherbert's carriage*," he was excluded from princely society.

An Old Etonian friend of the Beau informed his biographer that "Brummell had never taken pains to please Mrs Fitzherbert, who persuaded the Prince that his young associate spoke disrespectfully of him behind his back. . . . Charles Ellis invited the Prince to a party at Claremont. Brummell went as a matter of course, but the Prince met him almost at the door, and told him, with much tenderness of manner, that his presence was offensive to Mrs Fitzherbert and that the party would be destroyed if he did not return to London."<sup>1</sup>

According to Gronow, Brummell called once on Mrs Fitzherbert in London and found the Prince seated on the sofa and annoyed by his entry. When the Beau set down his snuff-box, the arbiter of European elegance said: "Mr Brummell, the place for your box is in your pocket and not on the table."

In the Prince's background were his extraordinary younger brothers. They were uneducated and unrestrained. They were full of unexpected energies and romantic sentiments. There was not one who did not make a mess of his amours. In turn they drew the amusement and criticism of the country, amounting at times to bewilderment and dislike. But they were not without genuine qualities. They were as courageous as they were ridiculous. To their elder brother they were devoted though they shared none of his advantages. They had been brought up as German

<sup>1</sup> J. H. Jesse: *Life of George Brummell*.



## Mrs Fitzherbert

Princelings instead of English gentlemen, and very fortuitously. They accepted Mrs Fitzherbert as the Prince wished, but of the secret marriage they were uninformed. Two of these strapping, happy-go-lucky Princes became close friends and champions of Mrs Fitzherbert. In years to come the Duke of York, the future Commander-in-Chief, and the Duke of Clarence, the Sailor King, stood by her with chivalry and devotion.

## CHAPTER IV

"Of all the attachments of George the Fourth, his passion for Mrs Fitzherbert was alike the least disreputable and the most lasting. Neither her personal beauty nor her natural genius were of the most brilliant order; yet, according to the universal testimony of her contemporaries, her strong good sense, the sweetness of her disposition, the grace of her manners, the fascination of her address, her unaffected courtesy to all, and her action and unobtrusive benevolence, invested her with charms which it was almost impossible to resist."—J. H. Jesse (*History of George III*).

ACROSS the glittering scenes gathered only the shadows of the Prince's debts, and across the pleasure house of Kubla Khan appeared the grim silhouette of Mr Pitt. Mr Pitt was Chancellor of that Exchequer from which alone could relief be expected.

The King was deeply perturbed. He wrote a signed note to Lord Southampton (April 16, 1787) to explain that what he really had said to the Prince is that he was considering the means to relieve him from his embarrassments. He must have an explanation of his past expenses and know the extent of his Debts, and also see a reasonable security for his moderation in future. "These points are rendered indispensable by the consideration of what I think due to my subjects." While the Prince maintained his present career, the King could not interfere.

The letter was passed to Mrs Fitzherbert and noted years later by George Seymour<sup>1</sup> before it was surrendered at Mrs Fitzherbert's death. The Dictionary of National Biography, under the heading of George IV, refers to an important meeting at this juncture:

"The rumour of this union [with Mrs Fitzherbert] seriously endangered his chance of obtaining parlia-

<sup>1</sup> *Ragley Papers*.

## Mrs Fitzherbert

mentary assistance in 1787. The leading Whigs headed by the Duke of Portland had declined to injure their Party by espousing his cause. At the meeting at Pelham's [second Earl of Chichester] the Prince denied that he was married to Mrs Fitzherbert but Fox alone was eager to support him."

The rumour about Mrs Fitzherbert was already spread nation-wide and never ceased to do the Prince political and official harm. In the exigencies of public life he was compelled to fall back on a handful of devoted personal friends like Fox and Sheridan.

The Prince's friends accordingly brought his debts before Parliament in April, 1787. Mr Pitt referred the matter to the King and hinted later of "a subject of the highest importance and of the greatest novelty." The Royal debts were no novelty, so what could he be referring to? The name of Mrs Fitzherbert was never mentioned, but Whig and Tory sat down to bluff each other under the cloud of gossip associated with her name. Nobody really knew on either side the extent to which the Prince had compromised himself. A good Protestant Squire, Mr Rolle, rose in the Debate of April 27 and declared "it was a question which went immediately to affect our Constitution in Church and State." Sheridan immediately parried, knowing that Rolle was slashing in the dark. Pitt, not wishing the motion to proceed, rose and threatened disclosures. Sheridan knew that he was bluffing and called on him to explain insinuations which he had converted into assertions. Was the Prince to yield to terror what was denied to argument? Pitt then retreated. He had only alluded to money matters! Sheridan quickly underscored Pitt's complete change of front. It was a running fight and Sheridan set Pitt running. Poor Rolle was steam-rollered. In time he became the subject of a comic poem:

## Fox Denies the Marriage

“ In vain high-blooded Rolle, unknown to fame,  
Had boasted still the honours of his name,  
In vain had exercised his noble spleen  
On Burke and Fox—the Rolliad had not been.”

As for the unhappy Prince “ three days—from the 27th to the 30th of April—were allowed him for deliberation, and in that interval he summoned Fox to Carlton House. Whatever may have been the particulars of their conversation, Fox, when he quitted the Prince’s presence, quitted it armed with the solemn word of H.R.H.”<sup>1</sup> This Mrs Fitzherbert denied, but only on the Prince’s word to her.

The motion was withdrawn for the time, but on April 30 Alderman Newenham challenged Rolle, while Fox pushed the discomfiture of Pitt to the utmost. He referred to “ so base and scandalous a calumny,” and without mentioning the marriage disposed of something “ which never had and, common sense must see, never could have happened.”

Pitt was left in a state of frigid vacuum, but Rolle fired his last challenges. Fox then denied the marriage in strong terms: “ the fact not only never could have happened legally, but never did happen in any way whatsoever.”

Lord Stanhope in his *History of England* said that Fox had the best reasons for supposing the statement true. Fox had apparently believed the Prince, whose vague instructions he had overdone.

Rolle had demanded direct authority and Fox straightly gave him direct authority. Sheridan then bore upon the stricken Rolle demanding an apology, which Rolle refused. Rolle was only extricated from his position by Pitt himself, but not before Sheridan had branded such gossiping as “ seditious and disloyal.” Grey then criticised Pitt for his “ veiled hints and menaces,” and the Debate was adjourned. This

<sup>1</sup> J. H. Jesse

## Mrs Fitzherbert

was Grey, the Premier of the Reform Bill in days to come; a refined and delicate sprig of the old Whiggery.

Who could believe or be believed in those days of bluster and bluff? Did Pitt believe Fox? Did Fox believe his own words? How much did Sheridan know? Did the House believe Fox? It was clear that Mr Rolle did not and never would.

“What is more mirthful than for those who sit  
To mingle in its war of words and wit,  
A listener here where Greek meets Greek, Fox Pitt!”<sup>1</sup>

In after years Lord Brougham wrote to correct Croker concerning Mrs Fitzherbert's part (April 19, 1854): “In private, at least to her very near connections, she was very communicative on the subject. Moreover, she never forgave Fox for carrying down the message of denial and always maintained that he knew the fact.”<sup>2</sup> It was George Selwyn who quoted the line from *Othello*:

“Vilain, be sure you prove my love a w——”

Lord Sheffield wrote to Eden (May 10, 1787):

“The amiable Rolle with his usual elegance and good judgment insinuated that the Church and State were in danger from the Prince's connection with Mrs Fitzherbert, which Pitt not only adopted by nods but even in a speech. The same evening he endeavoured to explain it away. On his return to Downing St he sent for Lord Southampton who waited on the Prince next morning with what is called an apology from Mr Pitt. The Prince told Lord Southampton he never received verbal messages except from the King. From this time he was eager to declare he was not married and Mrs Fitzherbert insisted that she should not be considered.”<sup>3</sup>

The Debate was recorded in different versions in the pages of Hansard and the *Gentleman's Magazine*.

Other persons besides Mr Rolle received shocks as

<sup>1</sup> Wilfrid Blunt.

<sup>2</sup> Croker Papers.

<sup>3</sup> Auckland Correspondences.

## Uncle Errington Affirms

a result of the Debate. Fox met Uncle Errington coming out of Brooks' Club and was curtly told: "Mr Fox, I hear that you have denied in the House the Prince's marriage to Mrs Fitzherbert. You have been misinformed. I was present at the marriage." In those days gentlemen spoke sooth.

Fox was deeply chagrined. He had saved the Prince at the expense of his own self-esteem and acquired no gratitude. From Mrs Fitzherbert he could only expect continual hatred. It was a year before he would meet the Prince again, but to his eternal credit he never damaged the reputation of his friend by a word.

The severest shock awaited Mrs Fitzherbert when the Prince decided to break the news of Fox's denial to her himself. According to Mr Bodenham, Lord Stourton's brother-in-law:

"Mrs Fitzherbert was on a visit with the Honourable Mrs Butler, her friend and relative, and at whose house the Prince frequently met Mrs Fitzherbert. The Prince called the morning after the denial of the Marriage in the House of Commons by Mr Fox. He went up to Mrs Fitzherbert, and taking hold of both her hands and caressing her, said: 'Only conceive, Maria, what Fox did yesterday. He went down to the House and denied that you and I were man and wife! Did you ever hear of such a thing?' Mrs Fitzherbert made no reply, but changed countenance and turned pale."

As Tom Moore recorded in his *Life of Sheridan*:

"In politics Princes are unsafe allies; in connections of a tenderer nature they are still more perilous partners and a triumph over a Royal lover is dearly bought by the various risks and humiliations which accompany it."

Lord Stourton's record was that:

"This public degradation of Mrs Fitzherbert so

## Mrs Fitzherbert

compromised her character and her religion and irritated her feelings that she determined to break off all connection with the Prince, and she was only induced to receive him again into her confidence, by repeated assurances that Mr Fox had never been authorised to make the declaration; and the friends of Mrs Fitzherbert assured her, that, in this discrepancy as to the assertion of Mr Fox and the Prince, she was bound to accept the word of her husband. She informed me [Lord Stourton] that the public supported her by their conduct on this occasion; for, at no period of her life were their visits so numerous at her house as on the day which followed Mr Fox's memorable speech; and, to use her own expression, the knocker of her door was never still during the whole day.

"I told her, that I understood there was a scrap of paper from the Prince to Mr Fox; that Sir John Throckmorton, a friend of his, had assured me of the fact of the Prince wishing much to obtain possession of it, but though written on a dirty scrap of paper, it was much too valuable to be parted with. She said that she rather doubted the fact. I think the difference between the assertions of the Prince and Mr Fox may be accounted for under a supposition (which I have also heard)—either that there was some ambiguity in the expressions used, or that Mr Fox might have referred to what had passed antecedently at Devonshire House, without being privy to their subsequent more formal engagements."<sup>1</sup>

This was most probably the truth, as the letter of the Duchess of Devonshire to her brother, Lord Spencer, on the occasion of the mock marriage shows. Did she not implore him to consult with Charles Fox? Henceforth to no one of the Prince's friends was Mrs Fitzherbert cause of greater alarm than to Charles James Fox, who struggled by every means, foul or fair, to avert what threatened disaster for the Whig Party.

<sup>1</sup> *Lord Stourton's Narrative.*

## Mrs Crouch

Her influence was the danger which he sought to turn by introducing the Prince to a brilliant but unscrupulous actress, Mrs Crouch. In later days George Dawson-Damer recorded some of Mrs Fitzherbert's conversation briefly :

"Fox' intrigue about Mrs Crouch. Heard introducing her to the Prince. Fox she never would forgive. He offered her to be a Duchess when the Talents (Ministry) came in.<sup>1</sup> She refused and it was upon her refusal that he got up the Crouch affair to diminish her power."<sup>2</sup>

Anna Maria Crouch ended her days in Brighton in 1805 and a memorial erected in the Church of St Nicholas describes how she could "gladden Life by the Charms of her Conversation and refine it by her Manners."

Lord Stourton continues :

"However this may be, an accommodation took place between Mrs Fitzherbert and the Prince, though she ever afterwards resolutely refused to speak to Mr Fox. She was, however, obliged sometimes to see him, and was much urged by the Prince to a reconciliation; but, though of a forgiving disposition upon other occasions, and even benefiting some who most betrayed her confidence, she was inflexible on this point, as it was one of the only means left her to protect her reputation. She thought she had been ill-used in a most unjustifiable manner by this public declaration before the House of Commons; especially as she had been waited upon by Mr Sheridan, who had informed her, that some explanation would probably be required by Parliament on the subject of her connection with the Heir Apparent. She then told him that they knew she was like a dog with a log round its neck and they must protect her."

<sup>1</sup> This must mean that he offered her a title should the Whigs come into power. The Talents combined Whigs and Tories in 1806-7.

<sup>2</sup> *Portarlington Papers*.



## Mrs Fitzherbert

One letter of Mrs Fitzherbert to Sheridan survives and may refer to this meeting :

“ Mrs Fitzherbert’s compliments to Mr Sheridan—was very sorry she was from home this morning when he was so obliging as to call upon her. As she goes out of Town on Sunday shall be very glad if he would call upon her tomorrow at two oclock as she wishes much to know what Mr Sheridan wished to communicate to her, having expressed the desire of a few minutes conversation. The *Natural Curiosity* attending *the Sex* will convince Mr Sheridan she couldn’t leave Town for a week without this inquiry.”<sup>1</sup>

Sheridan was always a favourite of Mrs Fitzherbert. Gillray went so far as to represent Sheridan kissing Mrs Fitzherbert while the Prince’s head lay in her lap.<sup>2</sup> We find the Archbishop of Canterbury writing later to Mr Eden (January 16, 1789) of Sheridan “ being actually an inmate of Mrs Fitzherbert’s now with his wife. They took refuge there on being driven out of their own house by the bailiffs who are now in it. Sheridan would willingly submit to be Chancellor of the Exchequer, but it is thought things are not ripe enough for the Manager of Drury Lane to be Manager of the House of Commons.”<sup>3</sup>

The Prince was profoundly moved by Mrs Fitzherbert’s distress and fell back upon Sheridan as a means of putting things straight for her in the Commons, but not without trying the austere Grey first :

“ The Prince sent for Mr Grey, and after much preamble and pacing in a hurried manner about the room, exclaimed ‘ Charles certainly went too far last night. You, my dear Grey, shall explain it ’; and then in distinct terms (as Grey has *since the Prince’s death* assured me) though with prodigious agitation, owned that a ceremony *had* taken place. Mr Grey observed

<sup>1</sup> *Sheridan Papers.*

<sup>2</sup> *Bandelures*: 1791.

<sup>3</sup> *Auckland Correspondence.*

## A Chivalrous Mantle

that Mr Fox must unquestionably suppose, that he had authority for all he said, and that, if there had been any mistake, it could only be rectified by His Royal Highness speaking to Mr Fox himself, and setting him right. . . . This answer chagrined, disappointed and agitated the Prince exceedingly; and after some exclamations of annoyance he threw himself on a sofa, muttering: 'Well then, Sheridan must say something.'"<sup>1</sup>

The following note or one similar to it must have been despatched to this invaluable ally:

"What I have to say to you will not admit of any delay as I must have some private conversation with you previous to my being able to talk to any one else. For God's sake come immediately. You are quite mad if you do not. G. P. C.H. 20 m pt 6 p.m."<sup>2</sup>

It is history how Sheridan entered the lists and on May 4 threw a chivalrous mantle over the insulted lady. According to Hansard:

"He concluded with paying a delicate and judicious compliment to the lady to whom it was supposed some late parliamentary allusions had been pointed, affirming, that ignorance and vulgar folly alone could have persevered in attempting to detract from a character, upon which truth could fix no just reproach and which was in reality entitled to the truest and most general respect."<sup>3</sup>

Another version of his words must have read equally agreeably to the injured soul of Mrs Fitzherbert:

"Mr Sheridan joined most heartily in the general joy and then, with great feeling, observed upon those cruel insinuations which had been thrown out, during the agitation of the subject, tending to wound the feelings of another person, whom every mind, tinctured with honour and delicacy, would wish to

<sup>1</sup> *Lord Stourton's Narrative.*

<sup>2</sup> *Sheridan Papers.*

<sup>3</sup> *Hansard's Parliamentary History*, Vol. 26

## Mrs Fitzherbert

shield from obloquy and injurious suspicions: and to whom every praise, which the finest and most valuable qualities of the heart could claim was unquestionably due."<sup>1</sup>

This Lord Holland was pleased to style "some unintelligible sentimental trash about female delicacy."

Pulteney wrote (May 4, 1787):

"Sheridan attempted very foolishly to repair his statement respecting the marriage by saying that Mrs Fitzherbert's situation was truly respectable at which everyone smiled."<sup>2</sup>

Mrs Sheridan wrote to Mrs Stratford Canning (May 7, 1787):

"In short we are all in high spirits about it. Poor Mrs Fitzherbert is very much to be pitied and I am glad for the honour of the fine world that they have shewn more good nature and attention to her than perhaps the outrageously virtuous would approve. Everybody has been to visit her since the Debate in the House of Commons and all people seem anxious to countenance and support her. Her behaviour has been perfectly amiable throughout."<sup>3</sup>

By keeping her counsel and making no mention of the marriage certificate in her keeping, Mrs Fitzherbert came well out of it. The House smiled at Sheridan's words, but it was a House of gentlemen, and the defence of a lady, whose name was apparently too sacred to utter, was allowed to pass with general assent into the unchallenged record of the House.

Sir Gilbert Elliot wrote (May 1, 1787):

"I think yesterday was a very good day for the Prince as the story of Mrs Fitzherbert was what staggered great numbers and he offers such unreserved satisfaction on every point which has been started against him that the natural desire of every

<sup>1</sup> *Gentleman's Magazine*, Vol. 57.

<sup>2</sup> *Rutland Papers*.

<sup>3</sup> *Papers of Mrs A. J. Butler*.

## Fox Discomfited

man to relieve him from so unbecoming a situation seems now to have nothing to contradict or restrain it. This conversation leaves Mrs Fitzherbert in an awkward way: but for my part I feel much better satisfied with her conduct now than I did before."<sup>1</sup>

Fox felt far more uncomfortable. He did not speak to the Prince for a year. The Prince continued to toast Fox as "the best man in England," but he had been careful not to summon him *in that guise* on a certain occasion to Mrs Fitzherbert's house in Park Street, or Fox would not have thus forsworn her honour.

So the Whigs were reassured and Mrs Fitzherbert forgave the Prince, and we catch a glimpse of the happy pair again (May 25, 1787):

"I met the Prince of Wales, as I went past the Queen's House, in his phaeton, in which I understood he took Mrs Fitzherbert to the Epsom races, and on his return, after a cold dinner, he was at the Duchess of Gordon's ball, where my daughter saw him dance. Mrs Fitzherbert danced a good deal."<sup>2</sup>

On the same day General Cunningham wrote to Mr Eden of a Supper at Sir Sampson Gideon's that "the Prince sat at table with Mrs Fitzherbert and all her particular friends near him. His attention to her has been more marked lately than usual."<sup>3</sup>

So for the time being all ended well, but historians cannot be certain of what really passed between Fox and the Prince. Fox swore he had a document which proved there was no marriage between the Prince and Mrs Fitzherbert. But no such document appeared among his papers. It was the most important paper in Fox's life, if it ever existed. It would have been almost the most important in the Prince's. It could hardly have been destroyed or lost. Could it have been sur-

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Sir Gilbert Elliot.*

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Auckland Correspondence.*

## Mrs Fitzherbert

rendered to the Prince? Was it the letter which the Prince wrote to Fox assuring him that he would not marry Mrs Fitzherbert? That was not enough on which to base the denial in the Commons.

It is possible that the Prince assured Fox by word of mouth, what was quite true, that there had been no legal marriage, and in the fierce play and counterplay of debate Fox exceeded the Prince's instructions. It was too tempting to lay out Pitt gasping and to gather the reins of debate under a whip hand.

Such glimpses were all that observers in Society could observe, observed they ever so keenly.

She had reason to feel happy again. She had forsworn no one. She had no need to prove she was an honest woman. It was accepted against the probabilities. The King's brothers, Gloucester and Cumberland, stood by her while the Duchesses of Cumberland, Devonshire, Portland, and Gordon poured attentions on her. Fox in a sulk went abroad. The Duke of Gloucester was in Florence whence he sent Mrs Fitzherbert a present (May 24, 1787):

"Dear Madam,

"I take the opportunity of a private hand to desire your acceptance of a Cestus done in oyster shell. I hope you will think it pretty. Your little friend will enclose a note if she has time, but she has a good many people to visit here and we are just setting out for Geneva. Pray send us by the safest opportunity some account to trust to of the present negotiation. I hope the Prince will be made easy in his affairs. I sincerely hope you are happy and well, for I know you deserve it. I remain, dear Madam, your humble servant,  
WILLIAM HENRY."<sup>1</sup>

This was the first of many tokens of trust and affection which Mrs Fitzherbert continued to receive from members of the Royal Family, once they had realised

<sup>1</sup> *Fitzherbert Papers*, III.

## A Public Appearance

how small a place pride, intrigue, or avarice had in her character.

Another Royal Duke, who showed the highest instincts of a gentleman, was the Duke of York. Mrs Fitzherbert, by marrying the Prince, had legally made the Duke of York the Heir-Apparent to the Throne, but he refused to allow the least claim to be whispered on his behalf. Whether the Prince revealed the marriage to him or not, he treated Mrs Fitzherbert with the same deference as if she had been a clandestine Princess of Wales and became her oldest and most faithful friend. The Royal brothers came to Brighton together and the *Morning Post* remarked (August 9, 1787):

“Mrs Fitzherbert looks more elegant than ever. One could hardly help exclaiming with the army of Mahomet II, when he shewed them his Irene, Such a woman is worth a Kingdom!”

Mrs Fitzherbert made a brilliant appearance at the Warren Hastings Trial in Westminster Hall. The Queen was affronted by her appearance with the Prince and withdrew. Macaulay had sketched in memorable words the matchless Dames who were present: Mrs Fitzherbert, Mrs Sheridan, and the Queen of the Whigs:

“There appeared the voluptuous charms of her to whom the heir of the throne had in secret plighted his faith. There too was she, the beautiful mother of a beautiful race, the Saint Cecilia whose delicate features, lighted up by love and music, art has rescued from the common decay, and there the ladies whose lips more persuasive than those of Fox himself, had carried the Westminster election against palace and treasury, shone round Georgiana Duchess of Devonshire.”

Society was left to think what it liked and inclined to be favourable though rather pitying. Lady Louisa

## Mrs Fitzherbert

Stuart wrote from Bath to Lady Portarlington (May 6, 1787):

"We hear of nothing but the Prince of Wales, but as we get no other account in our letters than what is to be seen in the Newspapers I will not repeat anything here: Lady Macartney writes us a long story from Lady Lonsdale's authority, who knows it all, but I confess I do not value her knowledge three farthings, though she has bustled and worked till she has made up a mighty friendship with the Duchess of Cumberland and thinks herself a very consequential person. I presume the Duchess gives her her intelligence, but it is not a bit the more likely to be true for that, for in these cases people tell the tale they wish to be believed. This then is a flaming opposition account. The Prince was with extreme difficulty prevailed upon to see Mr Pitt and the King's Minister very humbly consented to do everything the Prince pleased, which is so contrary to all probability that I wonder even Lady Lonsdale can swallow it. I quite rejoice that I am out of the actual hearing of the story, for I suppose her tongue is at this moment going faster than twenty mills. In the meantime however the Prince's friends have taken the trouble very fairly to declare Mrs Fitzherbert *something* in the House of Commons. I do think that poor woman has been cruelly used upon the whole and I pity her for she seems modest, unaffected and unpretending but not very wise, as her conduct has shewn."<sup>1</sup>

Mrs Fitzherbert was not spared the attentions of the eccentric and deluded Lord George Gordon of riotous memory, who called and demanded to know Mrs Fitzherbert's proper title. Mr Wat Smythe, accompanied by Mr Acton, returned the visit with a threat of calling him to account if he continued to take liberties with her name. Lord George, in some peril of a horse-whipping, wrote to Pitt (May 4, 1788):

<sup>1</sup> *Portarlington Papers.*

## Lord George Gordon

"I think it my duty to inform you as Prime Minister with this circumstance, that you may be apprized of, and communicate to the House of Commons the overbearing disposition of the Papists."

On May 9 Lord George appeared in Court and exhibited articles of the Peace against Mr Smythe and Mr Acton. Later he was tried before Judge Buller and found guilty of publishing an absurd Pamphlet in the shape of a Petition to himself from the prisoners at Newgate. It was an attempt to force the case of Mrs Fitzherbert into Court.

"Lord George then presented an affidavit stating that he had proceeded accompanied by a proper person to Mrs Fitzherbert's in order to serve her with a *subpœna*: that on appearing at her door he read the original *subpœna* and at the same time presented the copy and a shilling: but was together with the attendant turned out of doors by the servants. . . . The Attorney-General said he could not possibly allow the merits of the affidavit. He wished also to know to what parts of the defence the evidence of Mrs Fitzherbert would be applicable.

"Lord George replied by mentioning a conversation which he said he had with Mrs Fitzherbert at Paris with the relation of which he intermingled so many allusions to the situation of that Lady, either too indelicate or too absurd for repetition that Judge Buller was compelled to interpose. . . . After Lord George had equally attacked the moral character of the French Queen and the Empress of Russia, the Court was compelled to interfere and the Attorney-General observed: You are a disgrace to the name of Briton."<sup>1</sup>

Gillray portrayed the betrayal by a cartoon entitled "Dido Forsaken. *Sic transit gloria Reginæ*" (May 21, 1787). Mrs Fitzherbert surmounts the pile, crucifix in hand, while the Ministerial winds blow into

<sup>1</sup> *Gentleman's Magazine*, Vol. 57.



## Mrs Fitzherbert

the clouds coronet and plumes, sceptre and crown. The Prince escapes in the cock-boat of Honour while Fox steers and Burke trims the tattered sail. On March 27, 1788, Gillray produced his most famous skit on the affair "Wife or No Wife or a Trip to the Continent." The good-looking couple were represented before a shrouded altar, the Prince ringing his bride while Edmund Burke read the service and Fox gave her away. Lord North slumbered in a corner and Colonel Hanger stood witness. On April 5 appeared "The Morning after Marriage or a Scene on the Continent," of which it was best said by Thomas Wright, the Antiquarian, that "the grace of the picture must be the apology for a certain Hogarth-like suggestiveness which may be considered of questionable decorum." On July 1 appeared the "Fall of Phaeton," in which the Prince upset Mrs Fitzherbert from a curricule, said to have really occurred in the Park under the eyes of the King and the Queen.

In her *Memoirs* Lady Hester Stanhope supplies a character sketch at this time:

"Mrs Fitzherbert had a beautiful skin; at sixty it was like a child's of six years old; for I knew her well, having passed, when a child, six years in the same house with her. There are some people who are sweet by nature and who, even if they are not washed for a fortnight, are free from odour. Mrs Fitzherbert had a great deal of tact in concealing the Prince's faults. She would say: Don't send your letter to such a person: he is careless and will lose it. Or when he was talking foolish things she would tell him: You are drunk tonight, do hold your tongue."

The *Sussex Weekly Advertiser* gave a few indications of the new society at Brighton:

"July 25, 1787. His Royal Highness accompanied by the Duke and Duchess of Cumberland and Mrs Fitzherbert visited the Theatre at Brighton.

## More Publicity

" August 6. His Royal Highness attended the races with Mrs Fitzherbert and dined with her at the house of Colonel Pelham."

The Duke of Rutland, apart from his own Viceregal condition, thought it best to hold back the skirts of his own Duchess and wrote her from the Phoenix Lodge (June 25, 1787):

" I see the Prince of Wales begins to go on to all public places. Have you ever met him? Is he very civil to you? I suppose he will ask you to visit Mrs Fitzherbert which I would have you avoid. But I hear it is indispensable with him, so you had better be silent on that head till he asks you—if he should do so at all—and then I think your state of health will be a good excuse."

The Duke wrote again in July:

" If you go to bathe in the sea, do not go to Bright-helmstone, because you will be under a difficulty about Mrs Fitzherbert."

The Duke's own difficulty ceased with his death three months later. Meantime Dr Thomas Campbell, a sprightly visitor from Ireland, described his visit to Brighton (August 1, 1787):

" The Duchess of Rutland was by far the fairest of the fair. Mrs Fitzherbert did not dance the first set but the second she danced with Isaac Corry and after dancing down, she sat down with her partner and in a few minutes the Prince and the Duke of Cumberland came and sat beside her. The Prince expressed affection in his looks and the Duke esteem. She discovers strong sensibility and considerable dignity in her countenance and deportment."

In the following year (September 1, 1788) the Prince with Mrs Fitzherbert and some other persons of dis-

<sup>1</sup> *Rutland Papers.*

## Mrs Fitzherbert

tion honoured Lord Gage with a visit at Firle Place.

"September 8. Between 8 and 9 on Saturday evening the Prince, Mrs Fitzherbert etc passed through Lewes on their way from Tunbridge Wells to Brighton.

"September 15. The Prince of Wales, the Duke of Gloucester and Mrs Fitzherbert were present at the theatre on three occasions to see Lord Barrymore perform.

"October 27. The Prince was so alarmed by the accounts he received of the King's indisposition that he immediately set off from Brighton for Kew. The King being on Wednesday much better, the Prince returned on Thursday morning to Brighton. Last Friday a deer was turned out on the Steine for the diversion of the Prince and Mrs Fitzherbert who were present in their respective carriages.

"November 10. The King's alarming indisposition occasioned the Prince and Mrs Fitzherbert with their suite to leave Brighton at least a fortnight earlier than they otherwise intended to have gone from that place of gaiety and pleasure."

In November, 1788, the King became insane and there was a strenuous struggle for the Regency. When the King was believed to be dying, the Prince posted to Windsor with Jack Payne, the confidant who became an Admiral and played a mercurial part in Mrs Fitzherbert's life. She herself left Brighton for London with the Sheridans. The Prince's friends waited anxiously for the King's death. It meant office for some and importance for all. Mrs Fitzherbert herself hoped for the promised repeal of the Royal Marriage Act and recognition of her place as the wedded spouse of a ruler. It is history how Pitt thwarted all attempts to take the Regency from the King and how the King eventually recovered only to lapse into final insanity twenty years later.

## The Regency Debate

Fox was recalled from exile and returned, not to enjoy office, but to take part in the violent debates and intrigues between Tories and Whigs for the person of the King, the appointment of the doctors, and the assumption of the Regency. Pitt and the Queen were set on imposing restrictions on the Regent while the Prince was supported by his Royal brothers. For instance, the Regent was to be restricted from creating Peers, which was supposed to be a move to prevent him making Mrs Fitzherbert a Duchess, which he had declared he would do before marrying a Princess.<sup>1</sup> It was clear in the Regency Debate that she was at the back of everybody's mind and that her marriage coloured many a piquant phrase. Once again the House was distracted and diverted by an unproven Romance.

It is convenient to quote Lecky's summary of the Debate so far as it touched her:

"Among the subjects discussed during the debates on the Bill was the very embarrassing one of the reported marriage of the Prince with Mrs Fitzherbert. Rolle declared that he only—'gave his consent to appointing the Prince of Wales Regent upon the ground that he was not married to Mrs Fitzherbert either in law or in equity' and when a clause in the Regency Bill was introduced, annulling the powers of the Regent, if he either ceased to live in England or married a Catholic, Rolle moved an amendment excluding from the Regency any person proved to be married either in law or in fact to a Papist or one of Roman Catholic persuasion. The amendment was not pressed to a division but it produced an animated and somewhat remarkable debate. Fox was absent through real or serious illness.<sup>2</sup> Pitt declared the

<sup>1</sup> *Auckland Correspondence*.

<sup>2</sup> Lady Eleanor Butler noted more truly (February 5, 1789): "Mr Fox is at Bath in order to avoid the disputes which Mr Rolle's impertinent question will occasion. It is said Mrs Fitzherbert is determined to assert her claim."

## Mrs Fitzherbert

amendment to be wholly unnecessary but he dilated in terms of marked eulogy on the character and motives of Rolle and made a violent attack on Lord North, who had ridiculed the pertinacity with which Rolle dwelt on dangers to Church and State which could not possibly exist, as by the Royal Marriage Act there could be no marriage of the Prince of Wales without the consent of the King. Welbore Ellis caused the Royal Marriage Act to be read, asserting that this was a simple and sufficient answer to the rumours that had been spread. Dundas declared that the positive and explicit denial of the rumour, which Fox had been authorised to make two sessions before, had decided his opinion. He greatly regretted the absence of Fox on the present occasion, but he added that he had so high an opinion of his sincerity that he was confident that he would have come down to the House even at the risk of his life if anything had occurred to alter the opinion he had formerly expressed. But the most remarkable speeches appear to have been those of Grey, and it can only be said of them that it is to be hoped that his language was in fact somewhat less unqualified and emphatic than it appears in the meagre report. According to the reporter he, in two distinct speeches, denounced the rumour which had been circulated about the Prince of Wales and which had given rise to the Amendment before the House as false, libellous and calumnious.”<sup>1</sup>

According to Hansard the name of Mrs Fitzherbert was never mentioned. Lord Belgrave reproved Mr Rolle and alluded to “a very amiable and respectable character.”

The Attorney-General insisted that “rumours could not be made a ground for that House to legislate upon.” Lord North said the Act of Parliament, which had been read aloud, was enough. Mr Rolle’s motives might be good or bad. Pitt rebuked North for his

<sup>1</sup> Lecky: *History of England*.



MRS FITZHERBERT

From the painting by Thomas Gainsborough.  
By permission of Mr A. G. Sanderson



## *The Times* in Trouble

"contemptuous and insulting raillery." Mr Courtenay quoted Hudibras, Swift, and Goldsmith in order to heap Mr Rolle with ridicule. The Attorney-General made a final allusion "to the other amiable character" and assured the House "he knew not how to agitate a subject of such delicacy. He therefore wished at all times to close the door upon such discussions." The Amendment was thrown out and Parliament ceased to bandy Mrs Fitzherbert's affairs even with blindfolded eyes and velvet gloves. Fox caused some suspicion by his meditated absence. It was more than he could do a second time: to deny a marriage he had reason to believe was true. His place was taken by Grey, who, though he had been confidentially informed of the ceremony by the Prince, preferred to lie like a gentleman. If a Prince's honour was at stake, he was willing to sacrifice his own.

The struggle for the Regency occupied the zeal of the whole aristocracy on either side and the intense interest of the nation. Mrs Fitzherbert found herself the opposite number of the Queen in the game. The waves of intrigue, plot, and promise poured around her feet. At last in February, 1789, when the tide had swept the Regency into the hands of the Prince, the King recovered.

On February 4 it was necessary for Charles Smythe, her brother, to call Mr John Walter to account for some scurrilous notices which had appeared in *The Times* and to promise punishment should any more be printed. Mr Walter replied "that it was not the habit of *The Times* to treat any Lady with disrespect."

Two days later *The Times* announced:

"Whether this kind of *bravado* conduct in Mr Smith will have any influence upon the spirited truths sent to the *Times* for publication either respecting



## Mrs Fitzherbert

Mrs Fitzherbert or any other public character its future conduct will show."

It was no consolation to the Prince that the Irish Parliament voted him a Regency over the Emerald Isle without restrictions: the subject of a brilliant caricature by Gillray in which Mrs Fitzherbert appeared as chief mourner to the dead Bill.

It had been impossible for Mrs Fitzherbert to keep out of politics. She was the unseen keystone behind the whole arch of the Debate. As Mr Wilkins wrote:

"Behind all the disputes about the Regency, never mentioned in official documents or speeches, but lurking in all men's minds, was the question of the Prince's secret marriage to Mrs Fitzherbert. Fox's denial was now generally discredited and the country felt itself deceived. The old hatred of Popery existed in the provinces and it was partly the fear of the Prince's Papist wife, who had so great an ascendancy over him, that inspired the great towns and country districts to pour addresses in upon Pitt at this juncture, assuring him of their support."

The fortunes of the Whigs trembled in the balance. With the King's death the Tories would pass into the background. Every effort was made to bring the Whigs into line, but Mrs Fitzherbert still hung like a dead weight round their necks. George Selwyn wrote that "The Duke of Portland now sups every night with His Royal Highness and his brother at Mrs Fitzherbert's."

With the King's recovery the chances of the Whigs sank to zero, and by the end of April St Paul's Cathedral saw the King returning thanks to Heaven for his recovery. By a chance letter we know where Mrs Fitzherbert kept the feast of that day. An invitation to her survives from Charles de Calonne,<sup>1</sup> the

<sup>1</sup> Calonne was banished in 1787 when, as the Duke of Dorset reported from Paris, he was "within a hairsbreadth of being master of the destiny of France."

## Faction at Court

exiled French financier, who was entertaining the Prince to supper (April 22, 1789):

“Madam, I was desiring to ask you to do me and Madame Calonne the honour of dining with us the day that His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales is willing to give us the honour. He chose Saturday at first and I only knew at the ball yesterday after supper that he preferred Thursday which is tomorrow. I have called on you this morning to beg you to accept our invitation. We would be very flattered if you consented to do us this honour. The dinner can only take place at the return from the ceremony in St Pauls.”<sup>1</sup>

As a result of faction at Court a duel was fought between Colonel Lennox and the Duke of York, who was upholding his brother.

A letter survives which Edmund Burke addressed to Mrs Fitzherbert at this time on this affair. Edmund Burke wrote (May 26, 1789):

“On my arrival in town I received your most obliging letter and was going to Carlton House to make my acknowledgments when I received intelligence of the only affair which could suspend my recollection of His Royal Highnesses goodness to me. He must be void of all sentiment, who would not lose every other interest in his sympathy with the Prince of Wales in the feelings he must have had during the crisis of this morning. Thank God it has turned out, as every honest man must have wished, with an increase of honour to the Duke of York in every point which can or ought to be honourable amongst men and that he has not bought all this honour at the price which his great spirit was ready to pay for it.

“I really find myself unable to express all that my heart is full of upon this happy and awful occasion. You will be so indulgent to me, as to present to the

<sup>1</sup> Translated from the French: *Mrs Dawson-Damer's Autograph Book*.

## Mrs Fitzherbert

Prince of Wales my most dutiful and cordial congratulations on the Event.

“ The whole of this business from the beginning to the end, the train of circumstances, which attended it through its whole course and its intimate connection with the late political proceedings must give rise, in the mind of every thinking man, to reflexions of a serious nature. This affair has occupied the public attention for a fortnight or three weeks past. It has filled the Newspapers: and yet the King has, either known nothing or seemed to care nothing, about a business, which, as a father, a supreme Magistrate: or a commander of an Army or as a person of a Character compounded of all three, ought to have been an object of his vigilant attention, and his early precaution. I cannot be persuaded, but that the present is a moment that absolutely demands that the Prince of Wales both for his own sake and that of the public, should lay before the King a fair and full state of what has been done during his first illness relative to the past (which may soon become the future) arrangements whether His Majesty be absolutely capable of attending to it or not.

“ I hope you will make my apology to His Royal Highness for these suggestions. They look almost like the obtrusion of advice but they are unfeignedly submitted to his better judgment. At this moment I am sensible nothing ought to be mixed with our Joy on the happy event of this day. It will not interrupt it, if at a convenient time you express to His Royal Highness my truly grateful acknowledgments for the ready and gracious notice he has been pleased to take of the application I requested you to submit to his consideration.”<sup>1</sup>

With the King's recovery the Prince fell back on the pleasures of Brighton, where Mrs Fitzherbert's company was more necessary to him than ever. No doubt, had he attained the Throne in his prime, he

<sup>1</sup> *Portarlington Papers.*

## The Prince was Drunk

would have been a very different King. But her marriage would have been seriously challenged under such new conditions, and it was perhaps to her peace of mind that the perilous subject was allowed to lapse.

This was the period when he turned aside to excess and pleasure. An heir-apparent has always some difficult waiting hours to fill. Uneasy is the mind that awaits a Crown.

Lady Eleanor Butler noted (June 18, 1789):

"The Prince was drunk at the Birthday [June 4]. He would not behave decently at either of the Ambassadors' galas because Mrs Fitzherbert was not invited."

The Prince not unnaturally relieved his feelings of exasperation and impatience by gathering the most riotous and amusing companions he could find. Echoes of his practical jokes have come down the years. It is difficult to say whether Mrs Fitzherbert was grieved or amused. We can be certain that she tempered every excess and restrained the Prince from plunging into irreparable debauchery. No doubt the beauty of her person afforded him a sheet-anchor. But the practical jokes must have been trying. We hear of one of the Barrymores riding his horse up the stairs of her house. And a famous fencing master recorded:

"One night Lord Barrymore proposed, as there was a guitar in the house that I should play on it. I was to be the musician and he dressed in the cook-maid's clothes, and so to sing *Ma chere Amie*. Accordingly, taking me under Mrs Fitzherbert's window (it was then three o'clock) he sang while I played the accompaniment. The next day he told me (quizzing I should think) that the Prince said, Barrymore, you may make yourself a fool as much as you please; but if I had known it was Angelo I would have whipped him into the sea."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Reminiscences of Henry Angelo*.

## Mrs Fitzherbert

A paragraph from Thomas Raikes lets another ray through the curtains :

“ Few were the happy hours that she could number even at that period. He was young and impetuous and boisterous in his character, and very much addicted to the pleasures of the table. It was the fashion in those days to drink very hard, and Mrs Fitzherbert never retired to rest until her royal spouse came home. But I have heard the late Duke of York say, that, often when she heard the Prince and his drunken companions on the staircase, she would seek a refuge from their presence even under the sofa, when the Prince, finding the drawing room deserted, would draw his sword in joke, and searching about the room would at last draw forth the trembling victim from her place of concealment.”<sup>1</sup>

At that time Mrs Fitzherbert's little house was the centre of Catholicism in Brighton. Mass could be heard in her oratory, but as little was said on the subject as possible. She knew how much her religion had embarrassed the prospects of the Prince. They probably referred as seldom as possible to her religion until events on the Continent brought it forcibly into view.

The French Revolution brought Catholicism into many parts of England. Refugee noblemen and priests arrived in every direction. They received a magnanimous welcome. The University of Oxford actually printed a Latin version of the Scriptures for them. Priests were employed as French Tutors and teachers of music. A number of refugees arrived on the shore at Brighton.

The Benedictine nuns from Montargis reached Shoreham in total destitution. Mrs Fitzherbert immediately collected money for them and drove out to meet them. The exiles included members from old English families, and Sister Catherine Dillon proved to be a

<sup>1</sup> *Journal of Thomas Raikes.*

## Nuns at Brighton

friend of Mrs Fitzherbert. They were conveyed to Brighton and lodged in the Ship Inn where they were welcomed by the Prince, who entered warmly into their plans for the future. They aimed to reach the Netherlands, but the Prince advised their remaining in England. He showed his exquisite manners when he insisted on the ladies sitting while he was standing. At his advice they proceeded to London where they found he had furnished a house for them in Duke St. Here they opened a school and hence to Princethorpe, near Rugby, where they were able to open school and settle in community. Ever since that day at the close of Mass these nuns have sung the *Domine Salvum fac* in gratitude to the Royal Family of England.

The beautiful young Duchesse de Noailles arrived in great distress disguised as a cabin boy. When she landed on Brighton Beach, she was given clothes and lodging by Mrs Fitzherbert.

(August 29, 1792.) "The Duchess was received on coming on shore, by His Highness the Prince of Wales with Mrs Fitzherbert and Miss Isabella Pigot. The Prince with his usual affability escorted the Fair Fugitive to Earl Clermont's, where tea was provided for the Prince and twenty of his friends. . . . The Prince with that humanity and gallantry which so invariably distinguish him, has paid every attention to this amiable stranger. She this day rode out with Mrs Fitzherbert."

The local Press described later (September 10, 1792):

"Mrs Fitzherbert, the Duchesse de Noailles and many other ladies of distinction were present at the cricket match, and dined in a marquee. The Prince's band of music attended and played during the whole time the ladies were at dinner. In the evening Mrs Fitzherbert, the Duchesse, Lady Clermont and Miss Pigot walked round the ground, seemingly the better

## Mrs Fitzherbert

to gratify the spectators with a sight of the French lady."

A more interesting figure was Isabella Pigot, daughter of Admiral Hugh Pigot, and niece of George Lord Pigot. Devoted to the pleasures of intrigue, she lived with Mrs Fitzherbert, affording the presence of that "irreproachable female" who is so dear to the British conscience. Miss Pigot's name occurs in the famous Will which the Prince drew up in Mrs Fitzherbert's favour. Otherwise history has not much to say of her. There is a record of her in Lady Forester's note-book as follows:

"Belle Pigot was a most singular person. She was very intimate with George IV and knew all the Court gossip. She made regular rounds of visits in the Autumn and Winter to the great Houses in Staffordshire and Shropshire and remained in each House long enough to pay all her expenses. Everyone was delighted to have her. She was so amusing with her royal gossip. One day not being able to get Post horses, seeing a return Hearse drive up to the Inn, she went on by it.

"George Lord Forester told me that when he was a boy of 14 or 15 she was once nodding asleep in the drawing room when her head-dress took fire and was all in a blaze. He immediately twitched it off her head wig and all, when she fumed at him instead of being grateful."<sup>1</sup>

As a chaperon and go-between she became a favourite both of Mrs Fitzherbert and the Prince. Some undated notes that Isabella wrote to the Prince have survived:

"If you will have the goodness to hint to me what hour you would like to have Mrs Fitzherbert return home, as I am persuaded from her manner and con-

<sup>1</sup> *Jervis Papers.*

## Isabella Pigot

versation she will with the greatest pleasure be punctual."

"Mrs Fitzherbert is just gone to Lady Harrington's and is to call me again. Therefore pray don't attempt to come here but rely on it I will meet you at home by one o'clock."

"Mrs Fitzherbert is dressing and begs you will have the goodness to allow me to say for her that she shall be very happy to attend you to Brighton tomorrow. Will you be so good to send me one line just to say how we are to go and at what time, as she has as yet made no preparations and its being Sunday she must have her orders tonight."<sup>1</sup>

The following is but one of a large correspondence :

"I have told her what I have done and showed her your answer which from a mind so harassed as yours nothing can be objected to on it. For Gods sake calm your spirits and feel more happy. Have a little confidence in her and rely on it she will do everything that is right by you, but she says her spirits are so damped and her nerves so bad she must go out to endeavour to soothe her mind by change of scene and country but begs me to say she shall be at home again by a little after twelve and very happy to see you. Pray my dear Prince come, be kind and good-humoured which your own good heart and disposition will ever incline you I am sure to, and believe me you have much joy and happiness still in store for you. Don't ever exact too much but be assured you will in a very short time carry your point in every desire and wish of your heart and mutual allowances and little indulgences must be expected and good will granted from two people in whatever situation they are destined to live together."<sup>2</sup>

The Hon G. W. Russell quoted, from the Diary of Lord Robert Seymour, an adventure which befell Miss Pigot:

"The Prince of Wales, Mrs Fitzherbert, the Duke

<sup>1</sup> *Fitzherbert Papers*, II.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*



## Mrs Fitzherbert

and Duchess of Cumberland and Miss Pigot went a party to Windsor during the absence of the Family from Windsor and going to see a cold bath Miss Pigot expressed a great wish to bathe this hot weather. The Duke of Cumberland very imprudently pushed her in and the Duchess of Cumberland having the presence of mind to throw out the rope saved her. Mrs Fitzherbert went into convulsion fits and the Duchess fainted away. They afterwards pushed in one of the Prince's attendants."

Light-heartedness amongst the great is always pleasing. On another occasion (October 27, 1788) we learn from the historians of Brighton that a nobleman rode his horse to the top room of Mrs Fitzherbert's house. The horse "could not be induced to make the return journey and two blacksmiths were at last called in to get it down by main force, their reward being a bowl of punch at the Castle."

These pleasantries were sometimes turned against the Prince himself, one of which Frances Lady Shelley recalls in her Diary. Her husband, Sir John Shelley, had been before his marriage a constant admirer of Lady Haggerston:

"Lady Haggerston was the sister of the celebrated Mrs Fitzherbert. It was to this *liaison* that Sir John owed his intimacy with the Prince of Wales. Often have I heard my husband speak of the dulness of those suppers, *en parti carrée*, the two sisters, the Prince and himself. But sometimes the monotony was relieved by a practical joke.

"On one occasion, as Sir John entered the room, he saw the Prince kneeling at the feet of Mrs Fitzherbert in an attitude which suggested prayer rather than devotion to a woman. The broad expanse of the royal form, in an attitude of supplication, so excited Sir John's sense of the ludicrous that he gave the royal posterior a vigorous push, which sent his Royal Highness sprawling at his lady's feet!

## A Bailiff Arrives

"With a terrible oath His Royal Highness regained his feet and advanced towards his tormentor, who wisely made his escape *à toutes jambes!* The Prince there and then declared that he had already put up with much, but that this outrage should receive condign punishment.

"Eventually the two sisters succeeded in making peace and things went on as before. . . ."

The mysterious character, whom the Gods know as "Junius," but mortals as Sir Philip Francis, wrote to Mrs Fitzherbert from Paris (November 7, 1791):

"I should have lived a fortnight at Paris to very little purpose if I had not heard by this time with great certainty that all persons who one trusted are bound to give an account. . . . Mr John Payne had departed this life a few days before my arrival. The packet you intrusted to me may contain Letters of Consequence. I shall not be in London before the 9th of next month and you gave me no instructions about sending it back but rather if I recollect right to keep it till my return. If I hear nothing to the contrary I shall conclude this is still your intention."

It was not to be expected that blissful days at Brighton should last for ever. Financially the Prince was under considerable and continued pressure. On one occasion while he was in Mrs Fitzherbert's London house she was served with a writ by a bailiff. The Prince chivalrously allowed his own jewels to be pawned to pay the debt. On another occasion when returning from a Race-meeting together it was necessary for Mrs Fitzherbert to borrow five pounds from the postilion.

## CHAPTER V

"A bachelor-cobbler is a happier Man than a Prince in wedlock."—  
JOHN DRYDEN (*The Spanish Friar*).

LAERTES TO OPHELIA:

Perhaps he loves you now  
And now no soil nor cautel doth besmirch  
The virtue of his will. But you must fear,  
His greatness weighed, his will is not his own,  
For he himself is subject to his birth.  
He may not, as unvalued persons do,  
Carve for himself, for on his choice depends  
The sanity and health of this whole state,  
And therefore must his choice be circumscribed  
Unto the voice and yielding of that body  
Whereof he is the head.

SHAKESPEARE (*Hamlet*).

Your safety 'twas that drew me to this fraud.  
The guilt that others blame you should applaud.  
But 'stead of thanks your Court I am forbid:  
Yourself forbade me, faithless Jason did!  
At length thy revelling nuptial songs surprise  
My wounded ear, thy nuptial torch my eyes.  
The rabble shout, the clamour nearer drew,  
And as it came more near, more dreadful grew.  
My servants weep in corners and refuse  
Th' ungrateful task of such unwelcome news.

N. TATE (*Jason and Medea*).

GLIMPSES abound of the vivid and varied life which Mrs Fitzherbert enjoyed. Surrounded by the friends of the Prince and courted by all who worshipped the rising sun, she held her position in a Society which, compared to the modern Circus, had some of the distinction of a Noah's Ark. Horace Walpole was scribbling to the Miss Berrys (November 29, 1790):

"Richmond my metropolis flourishes. The Duke of Clarence arrived at his Palace there last night. His eldest brother and Mrs Fitzherbert dine there today with the Duke of Queensberry."

(June 8, 1791.) "The Prince was gorgeous too.

## The Queen Grateful

The latter is to give Madame d'Albany a dinner. She has been introduced to Mrs Fitzherbert."

During these years the *Sussex Weekly Advertiser* recorded their doings openly :

" April 16, 1792. H.R.H. the Prince of Wales, Mrs Fitzherbert and many of the nobility graced the Steine. How much better this than to waste property and reputation with the Jockey Club at Newmarket!

" May 28. On Saturday last the Prince of Wales, Mrs Fitzherbert and the Earl of Barrymore were present at a grand field-day given in honour of the Duke and Duchess of York.

" September 3. The Prince's fête took place last Monday. The Prince and Mrs Fitzherbert looked on for a considerable time with great good humour.

" November 12. On Tuesday last the Prince and Mrs Fitzherbert visited the Theatre to see *The Orphan*."

By 1791 the Prince had become reconciled to the King, very largely through Mrs Fitzherbert's influence. She only sought to spare sorrow and scandal to the Royal Family, who gradually learned how unselfish and discerning a friend had entered their circle. Although the Queen had hopes that the notorious Lady Jersey would draw away the Prince's affections, she felt and showed the greatest gratitude at all times to Mrs Fitzherbert.

" In one of the documents lodged at Coutts purporting to be a Will of the Prince of Wales there is a strong expression of his gratitude to both the King and Queen for their kindness to Mrs Fitzherbert."<sup>1</sup>

Gouverneur Morris, the American emissary, wrote in his diary (April 29, 1790): " Mrs Church's Ball. Things here are really magnificent and well conducted. The Royal Brothers and Mrs Fitzherbert are among

<sup>1</sup> MS. note by Admiral George Seymour.

## Mrs Fitzherbert

the guests. The Duke of Orleans also is here with his two brothers just arrived from Paris."

This did not prevent Lady Jersey making all possible trouble, of which a reflexion occurs in a letter of Lady Stafford to the first Lord Granville (July 18, 1794):

"I understand that the misunderstanding between the Prince and Mrs Fitzherbert is made up. The story is too long to write but after he had been persuaded by a certain lady<sup>1</sup> to give up and to write according to that idea to Mrs Fitzherbert he found he could not live without her and sent messengers of Peace in numbers. But Mrs Fitzherbert was for some days sturdy: She could not believe that he could continue to love her, when for months he had given his time to another and had behaved to her with the greatest cruelty. But they are friends now and the mischief-maker is left to find out another or to go on with you know who. All about Mrs Fitzherbert you can know more certainly from Jack Payne."<sup>2</sup>

Lord Stourton tells us:

"Her first separation from the Prince was preceded by no quarrel or even coolness, and came upon her quite unexpectedly. She received when sitting down to dinner at the table of William the Fourth, then Duke of Clarence, the first intimation of the loss of her ascendancy over the affections of the Prince; having only the preceding day received a note from His Royal Highness, written in his usual strain of friendship, and speaking of their appointed engagement to dine at the house of the Duke of Clarence. The Prince's letter was written from Brighton, where he had met Lady Jersey. From that time she never saw the Prince, and this interruption of their intimacy was followed by his marriage with Queen Caroline; brought about, as Mrs Fitzherbert conceived, under the twofold influence of the pressure of his debts on the mind of the Prince, and a wish on the part of Lady

<sup>1</sup> Lady Jersey.

<sup>2</sup> *Granville Papers.*

## The Plainer Vegetable

Jersey to enlarge the Royal Establishment, in which she was to have an important situation."

It seems probable that under the weight of debts claimed by creditors, up to £375,000, the Prince had to accept any terms the King imposed upon him. His Majesty had won the admiration of his subjects by his fidelity to an unromantic German Princess. The Duke of York had confirmed his father's affections by marrying another. The time had come for the Prince to do likewise. This meant leaving Mrs Fitzherbert in the lurch. At one blow he was required to deprive her of her husband and her reputation. As long as he remained unmarried, some bond could be suspected between the two, but if he publicly married a Princess it was clear that Mrs Fitzherbert had been living in a subordinate moral position.

The contrast between his "white rose" and the plainer vegetable from a German garden was more than he could be expected to endure. He found a stepping-stone in the artful Lady Jersey, daughter of an Irish Bishop. She was a grandmother, but a Siren all the same. She was not only ready to break his connection with Mrs Fitzherbert. She was prepared to take her place. This was not entirely according to the Royal plan for marrying the Prince to a Protestant Princess. Nevertheless Lady Jersey received encouragement from Windsor.

In June, 1794, Mrs Fitzherbert was in Richmond preparing to meet the Prince at dinner at Bushey, the home of the Duke of Clarence, when she received a letter from Brighton (June 23, 1794):

"My dearest Love I have just received a letter from my Sister by the Coach this evening, desiring me to come to Windsor, which though exceptionally inconvenient to me at this moment, in particular, owing to my being to give my annual Regimental dinner on Wednesday, I mean to comply with and to set out

## Mrs Fitzherbert

tomorrow morning early, having put off my dinner with all my Company to Friday. I therefore mean to pass Wednesday in London and return here on Thursday. I have just been dining at the General's, where we have had a very pleasant and a very jolly party. Adieu, my dear love, excuse haste

“ Ever thine G. P.”

Unfortunately he changed loves as easily as he changed horses on the way, and later in the same day Mrs Fitzherbert received her dismissal. She endorsed the first letter thus :

“ This letter I received the morning of the day the Prince sent me word he would never enter my house. Lady Jersey.”<sup>1</sup>

As soon as he broke with Mrs Fitzherbert the Prince expected his friends to follow suit. Lord Hugh and Lady Horatia Seymour preferred to cling to Mrs Fitzherbert and forfeited the honour of his Household. Lady Melbourne, who had been a flame of the Prince, also preferred Mrs Fitzherbert whereupon the Prince broke with her altogether.

Mrs Fitzherbert was living at this time at Marble Hill, which thanks to the London County Council has survived with some fine trees in a park beside the river at Twickenham.

Curiously enough Marble Hill was built chiefly at the expense of a previous Prince of Wales who admired Henrietta Howard (later Countess of Suffolk). According to Horace Walpole her husband had sold her for £1200 a year. This Prince spent ten times that amount in building this beautiful and lustrous villa with its likeness to white marble and its fine mahogany staircase. Dean Swift brought Marble Hill into a poem :

“ Here went the Dean when he's to seek  
To sponge a breakfast once a week.”

<sup>1</sup> *Fitzherbert Papers*, III.

## “Jacko” Payne

Along its grassy path sheltered by shady elms once walked Jeanie Deans with the Duke of Argyll when she came to beg her sister's life. According to Sir Walter Scott she walked to Marble Hill from the Heart of Midlothian.

In August, 1792, the house passed to Henrietta Hotham, daughter of Lady Suffolk's niece. Miss Hotham let it to Mrs Fitzherbert. According to the rate-book Mrs Fitzherbert was in residence during 1795, but in the following year the occupier is referred to as “late” Mrs Fitzherbert, so presumably she left soon after the Prince's official marriage.

It is not impossible that the Prince hoped to retain some relation, even the marital, with Mrs Fitzherbert, whom at heart he confessed he had not ceased to love. To keep in touch with her he relied entirely on Jack Payne and Belle Pigot.

“Jacko” Payne has been reviled as a pimp and he was blackballed when the Prince put him up for Brooks' Club, but he was a gallant sailor who shared in the victory of the Glorious First of June. He served the Prince through thick and thin. He escorted Philippe Egalité when that Prince left England for his death, and he commanded the ship which brought the Princess Caroline from Germany to wed the Prince. He died a Rear-Admiral in 1803. He retained Mrs Fitzherbert's regard and affection to the end of his life.

To all entreaties of the Prince Mrs Fitzherbert professed no reply. She maintained a silence which the Prince hoped was one of grief, but which he suspected was more likely to be contempt. He was only anxious that they should part on good terms, that their marriage should be forgotten, and all traces destroyed. He knew that he was putting his prospects in her hands, but he knew they were hands which would never be raised against him. He could not bear, nevertheless, to be out of her heart much less out of her mind.



## Mrs Fitzherbert

But she would not correspond with him even when he grew ill with misery and annoyance. Payne was sent in pursuit and some of his excitable letters to the Prince survive :

Hambledon :

“ Mrs Fitzherbert arrived here late this night and heard with great concern that you are unwell, which she desires me to express in her name and which she would have done herself by letter, if she had not been so fatigued by a tedious journey as to be incapable of doing it. I hope to be able to get over to Brighton though but for six hours, as the Fleet are expected to sail every day and I will certainly write to Your Royal Highness whenever anything occurs. Till that event takes place I am not without hopes that Mrs Fitzherbert will, during the time that she remains here, collect quiet enough to be enabled to express the concern she feels at Your Royal Highness’ indisposition in a manner which may tend to the object your mutual friends have as much at heart as yourself as involving the happiness of those they feel as their own. I have to say to Your Royal Highness that I have read the part of this letter to Mrs Fitzherbert.”

(July 29, 1794) :

“ I feel the strongest necessity of remaining here as long as I can get Mrs Fitzherbert to stay, who would have left this place for Margate this morning, but has now consented to stay till tomorrow evening and to go through London. Her mind is very much disturbed at the thought of your being ill, but be assured, my dear Prince, that her dread of writing herself to you again in my mind seems to arise more from the persuasion of the impossibility of your being happy in future than any resentment of what is past and the more violence you betray will more strongly confirm this opinion. I have got her to promise to write to you but more at present is impossible to do and that has been by avoiding all past causes of com-

## Letters from Payne

plaint and considering only that which in future comfort and tranquillity might arise and I am persuaded that if I had revived all past transactions and attempted to talk over and over again what has so often embittered the peace of you both, Mrs Fitzherbert would not have remained here an hour."

(July 30, 1794):

"I am not sorry I stayed till Mrs Fitzherbert's departure as I did not get her into a state of mind tranquil enough to write a letter till 2 o'clock in the morning of her leaving this and which I put in the post here to avoid any changes that might prevent its being sent. I am in hopes that in the temper she left this and the effect the idea of your illness had upon her and induced her to write to you, that something may be hit upon to accomplish the wish Your Royal Highness has so much at heart and which as long as it continues so, must ever be mine. The strong assurance that I gave her of having mentioned to Your Royal Highness the apprehension she entertained about 'her letter being shewn' prevailed most upon her to give up her objection to it and therefore I conclude that the moment she becomes more tranquil and the present rumour of her separation dies away a little, she will be most inclined to obey your wishes. I am anxious to hear from her and shall this day write as I see by the Papers she is gone to Margate which I hope is not true.

"I have not, dearest Sir, the means of informing you of anything relative to Margate till yesterday when I heard from Mrs Fitzherbert who, I believe, means soon to be in town and I am persuaded that if you still retain the wish of having the interview you mentioned to me, and that it was not to be likely to revive the discussion of old complaints Your Royal Highness might have the opportunity of saying what you thought proper without incurring the least risk of that misinterpretation, which has arisen from the representation of others and a good deal of ill-humour

## Mrs Fitzherbert

nourished that by all immediate explanation might have been avoided. She says that no part of her objection has arisen from either obstinacy or pique but from the conviction of nothing either agreeable or advantageous arising from it to either Your Royal Highness or herself and that she has formed no resolution that is founded on anything like a disregard to either your wish or happiness. I have written to her today and shall hear when she sets out for town or if Your Royal Highness has anything that I can suggest to her, it will reach me time enough to apply it to her before she gets to town. Lord Garlies is just arrived from Jervis<sup>1</sup> who says the business in Guadeloupe is not as bad as it was at first said. The French have got the fever and we have not and that the Island will fall to the first that gets out a reinforcement. I saw a person yesterday four days from Brest. He says Robespierre was burnt in effigy the 10th inst, and a great fête given in commemoration of his death."

"Upon this subject it behoves me, Sir, to put you upon your guard against an agitation that so engrosses your mind that it makes you run counter to the objects you pursue and oftentimes destructive of your happiness. . . . This town-talk, which Mrs Fitzherbert has been so much the object of, has been one of the most powerful opponents Your Royal Highness has met with and I find the dread of an exposure of Mrs Fitzherbert's letter has operated most strongly in her resistance of any wish upon that subject. These rumours, generally increased in their progress, are sure to meet her ears, keep her in eternal apprehension. Let me entreat Your Royal Highness that no chance may make it possible (if you get a letter) that its contents may come round by any means again to a *certain person* as I am persuaded it would be *her* last. I am doubly anxious on this head as I am persuaded you are not aware of what you say at this moment, that is detrimental to your own wishes and 'tis therefore that I remind how nearly everything has been

<sup>1</sup> Admiral Lord St. Vincent.

## Report from Brighton

frustrated by your forgetting the last caution I gave Your Royal Highness before I left town respecting your expressing any wish about Mrs Fitzherbert coming here. By the post I learnt of your having expressed all this and her resolution, taken in consequence of the knowledge of it, was to avoid us and deprive us of the means of assisting you."

From Brighton the Prince's emissary further reported:

"I found Mrs Fitzherbert's health less good than I had expected but had the greatest pleasure in finding her in the happiest disposition to conform to every wish of yours and I was convinced in the course of the long conversation which Your Royal Highness' confidence in me encouraged her to enter into without reserve that if she in future fails in obeying those wishes that it can only arise from not perfectly understanding them and not from any other cause, as the principal object of her life is to study your happiness and will be to mark how much she rejoices in the hope you have now given her through me that all former grievances and disagreements shall be forgotten."

The Prince later wrote his thanks to Payne (August 21, 1794):

"I am extremely obliged to you for your kind letter which I received last night on my arrival in town. But it is now too late to think of anything further respecting this very unpleasant business. I have at last taken my resolution and all I can say is that I shall ever be happy to contribute everything that lays in my power to render Mrs Fitzherbert's situation as comfortable as possible and to testify every sort of attention and kindness to her and that too in the manner than can be most pleasing to her feelings *mais tout est fini*. I think it perfectly needless to say anything more upon it except, my dear little —, to express the best thanks of your friend for all the pains, trouble and vexation which you have had to encounter in

## Mrs Fitzherbert

endeavouring to secure his happiness on a permanent basis for the rest of his life."<sup>1</sup>

Three days later he assured the King that all was over between him and Mrs Fitzherbert.

The Prince was the greatest of Optimists, as he always believed that Happiness would be eternised in the most temporary arrangements.

With his debts paid he could offer Mrs Fitzherbert the continuance of her £3000 a year, which she accepted under orders from Mr Errington, who regarded it as honourable alimony and far from the wages of pensioned sin. The Prince was more anxious to placate Mrs Fitzherbert than to court his official wife. He sent Lord Chancellor Loughborough to ask the King to continue the pension, should he die before his father. Loughborough's polite answer was one of the papers Mrs Fitzherbert later retained in Coutts' Bank. It amounted to a promise of her annuity backed by the word of a King in the handwriting of his Chancellor. It alluded to "a Lady who had been distinguished by your regard" and announced (December 19, 1794):

"Sir,

"In obedience to Your Royal Highness's commands, I had the honour of representing to His Majesty the anxiety you had expressed lest a possible though very improbable event might interrupt the continuance of that provision you had thought proper to make for a Lady who had been distinguished by your regard, and at the same time to express the hope Your Royal Highness entertained that in such an event His Majesty's goodness might extend to the prolongation of it. His Majesty was pleased to receive this communication in the most gracious manner, observing at the same time that in the natural order of things the occasion was not likely to present itself, but that Your Royal Highness had no reason to entertain any uneasiness on this account."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Fitzherbert Papers*, II.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* I.

## Return to Widowhood

The Prince could not have been happy, for the tactless Princess thought proper to chaff him over Mrs Fitzherbert, and Pitt would only pay his debts out of income. Still he remembered to make provision for the deserted wife and wrote to Henry Dundas at this time :

“ In consequence of one of these trying and painful events which unfortunately for those, who had strong feelings, sometimes occur in the course of our lives, I cannot help troubling you with these few lines, just to say, that as the small annuity of £3000 a year which I pay to Mrs Fitzherbert must cease on any events happening which might terminate my life, it is my request that you should lay me at His Majesty’s feet and request that he would be graciously pleased to ensure in case of my death the continuation of this Pension to Mrs Fitzherbert in consideration of her good conduct towards me during the last ten years and should His Majesty of his goodness be pleased to consent to my humble request I am ready to relinquish every pretension to further favor of any kind on our own account and I assure you, my dear sir, in obtaining this for me you will lay a lasting obligation on me.

“ Your sincere friend G. P.

“ P.S. I hope you will excuse this scrawl as I really know hardly what I write.”<sup>1</sup>

Mrs Fitzherbert retired into the background with perfect dignity. She never embarrassed nor hindered the man she loved. She avoided scenes and returned to the widowhood from which the Prince had drawn her with such passionate gusto ten years previously.

Horace Walpole scribbled (July 29, 1794) :

“ Would to Heaven . . . that Mrs Fitzherbert and Lord Howe are as satisfied as if both were nodding under ostrich feathers.”

<sup>1</sup> *Fitzherbert Papers*, II.

## Mrs Fitzherbert

Lord Mornington, brother of the Duke of Wellington, wrote from Brighton (July 15, 1794):

"I heard last night that a Treaty of separation and provision is on foot (if not already concluded) between His Royal Highness and the late Princess Fitz. I think you ought to marry His Royal Highness to some *frow* immediately; and I am told he is very well disposed to take such a wife, as it may be His Majesty's pleasure to provide for him."

There had been two Princesses at one time suitable to the King's receipt: his own niece, Caroline of Brunswick, and the Queen's, Louise of Mecklenburg-Strelitz.

Caroline was dumpy, ill-dressed, indiscreet, and absurd. Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe later described her in overwhelming phrases:

"Her eyes projected like those of the Royal Family. She made her head larger by wearing an immense wig. She also painted her eyebrows which gave her face a strange fierce look. Her skin was very red. Her feet and ankles were dreadful."

Louise was beautiful, talented, regal, and, when faced by Napoleon's bullying, a heroine. Unfortunately she had been secured by Prussia. History would have been different had she ascended and embellished the Throne of England.

Cynically and recklessly the Prince took Caroline, to the joy of his Royal father who informed Pitt (August 24, 1794):

"I have this morning seen the Prince of Wales, who has acquainted me with his having broken off all connection with Mrs Fitzherbert and his desire of entering into a more creditable line of life by marrying; expressing at the same time the wish that my niece, the Princess of Brunswick, may be the person."

The King was not too easy in his mind and Lord Stourton asked Mrs Fitzherbert if His Majesty "the

## Open House in London

day before the marriage, had offered to take upon himself the responsibility of breaking off the match with the Princess of Brunswick, should the Prince desire it."

"Of this she told me she knew nothing, but added that it was not improbable, for the King was a good and religious man. She owned, that she was deeply distressed and depressed in spirits at this formal abandonment, with all its consequences, as it affected her reputation in the eyes of the world.

"One of her great friends and advisers, Lady Claremont, supported her on this tragic occasion and counselled her to rise above her own feelings, and to open her house to the town of London. She adopted the advice much as it cost her to do so; and all the fashionable world, including all the Royal Dukes, attended her parties. Upon this, as upon all other occasions, she was principally supported by the Duke of York, with whom, through life, she was always united in the most friendly and confidential relations. Indeed, she frequently assured me, that there was none of the Royal Family who had not acted with kindness to her. She particularly instanced the Queen; and as for George the Third, from the time she set footing in England he could not have acted towards her with greater tenderness and affection. She had made it her constant rule to have no secrets of which the Royal Family were not informed by frequent messages, of which the Duke of York was generally the organ of communication, and to that rule she attributed at all periods much of her own contentment and ease in extricating herself from embarrassments which would otherwise have been insurmountable."<sup>1</sup>

Meantime the Prince proceeded to his legal and constitutional marriage, but whether he actually completed Bigamy the Lawyers and the Canonists will always be at variance. He stifled his conscience, but not his sense of remorse. Mrs Fitzherbert told Lord

<sup>1</sup> *Lord Stourton's Narrative.*



## Mrs Fitzherbert

Stourton : " that a day or two preceding the marriage he had been seen passing rapidly on horseback before her house at Marble Hill, but that his motive for doing so was unknown to her."

It could not have been unknown to the King who uneasily entrusted him in those anxious days to the Duke of Clarence. In later years Clarence recalled the event in conversation with Sir George Seymour :

" (April 24, 1837) King William IV talking with me over Mrs Fitzherbert's more material papers told me he thought Lord Albemarle's tone in speaking of Mrs Fitzherbert's marriage to George IV wrong, which he himself and the Duke of Wellington thought legally no marriage whatever.

" His Majesty added that he could not have done what his brother did. He might have been as anxious to marry a woman he loved, but he would not have done so against the Laws of the Country and even if he had, he would not have denied it or married another woman. His Majesty added that the only time the late King had ever spoken to him on the nature of his union with Mrs Fitzherbert was on the evening of his Marriage to Princess Caroline when George III desired him not to quit the Prince and he drove with him to Carlton House to dress for the Ceremony. After dinner as they passed through the garden the Prince of Wales said: William, tell Mrs Fitzherbert she is the only woman I shall ever love."<sup>1</sup>

The Duke of Clarence visited Mrs Fitzherbert on the following day, but she refrained from showing him her Papers. Lord Holland mentioned Caroline's " indelicate manners, indifferent character," and she herself betrayed herself by informing Lady Jersey (her lady-in-waiting) of a previous love affair of her own. This was no doubt repeated to the Prince. But there was worse, which occurs in some strange sentences which George Dawson-Damer recorded from Mrs

<sup>1</sup> MS note by Sir George Seymour: *Ragley Papers*.

## Who was Prince Louis ?

Fitzherbert's conversation long after all concerned were dead :

" Princess of Wales married to Prince Louis. Could have bastardised Princess Charlotte. Compounded with the mother—Lord Loughborough by George III's commands. She saw Princess Charlotte who implored her.

" A Peer still alive, who had been a Lover of the Princess of Wales, who implored him to destroy the Certificate of marriage to Prince Louis."

Who could this Prince Louis have been ? There was Frederick *Louis* of Hesse Homburg who married the Princess Elizabeth, and Charles *Louis* of Mecklenburg-Strelitz, and *Louis* of Wurtemberg, who was brother-in-law to the Princess Royal.

In later years his brother Ernest, Duke of Cumberland, reported to the Prince from Strelitz (May 26, 1813) :

" A curious thing I found out, she was upon the point of being married to the son of the Dowager Landgravine of Hesse Darmstadt, Prince George, when your proposals stopped it."<sup>1</sup>

Of the Prince's unhappy marriage nothing need be said. He deserved more pity than condemnation at this stage, and pity Mrs Fitzherbert was no doubt able to afford him in spite of her own agony of mind. She withdrew into the background without a reproach or a sigh. She is said to have fainted when the news of the actual wedding was broken to her. (April 8, 1795.)

Mr Wilkins adds :

" The public curiosity was great. What would Mrs Fitzherbert say ? What would she do ? But Mrs Fitzherbert uttered no cry and made no complaint. She closed her doors to her friends and went into retirement as though she were widowed, thus escaping the

<sup>1</sup> *Windsor Archives.*

## Mrs Fitzherbert

sympathy of those who wished her well and the curious gaze of the vulgar. In this, as in all crises of her life, her conduct was admirable in its dignity and self-restraint."

In a letter of pathetic generosity written to Mr Coutts her banker she wished the best possible to the Prince and Princess and rightly claimed that she had set their happiness above her own.

She gave the new wife not the least cause for jealousy. Indeed she soon won her admiration.

The only link left between Mrs Fitzherbert and the Prince was now "Jacko" Payne. He remained in the confidences of both. The Prince mentioned him in his Will and his portrait hung on Mrs Fitzherbert's walls until her death. When Payne was blackballed at Brooks', the Prince founded his own Club for his friends.

Mrs Fitzherbert did not wait to see London illuminated for the Royal wedding nor listen to the Churches pealing their ironical congratulations:

"Oranges and *lemons*  
Say the Bells of St. Clements."

By an exercise of exquisite taste she ordered her London house to share in the rejoicings.

"The house of Mrs Fitzherbert in Pall Mall was among those illuminated in honour of the Prince's nuptials. The lady herself was at her villa, lately Lady Bridget Tollemache's near Richmond."<sup>1</sup>

She gave up her residence in St James' Square and purchased No. 6 Tilney Street, which stood within sight of Park Lane and Stanhope Gate until recent memory of man. It is now occupied by Flats which at least have the honour of bearing her name as Fitzherbert House.

She deserted Brighton for the time and turned to Margate. Already Miss Berry had written (Septem-

<sup>1</sup> *Sussex Weekly Advertiser*, April 13, 1795.

## The Prince's Will

ber 28, 1794): "Mrs Fitzherbert is at Margate driving away sorrow in a phaeton and four"; and Lord Orford had written facetiously to Miss Berry that "the Princess arrived at St James on Sunday nor do I believe that Mrs Fitzherbert will forbid the Banns, for she has taken Marble Hill and proposes to live very Platonically under the devout wing of Mrs Cambridge."

It is not here the place to dwell on the misery of the Prince save to say that after an heiress to the Throne had been born (January 7, 1796) he could stand it no longer, and three days later wrote a most passionate and sentimental Will in Mrs Fitzherbert's favour. It was the most affecting of the documents which Mrs Fitzherbert afterwards preserved at Coutts' Bank, and in subsequent years reduced the two Sovereigns who perused it to genuine tears.

The pith of this remarkable document<sup>1</sup> was the bestowal of all his worldly property "to my Maria Fitzherbert, my Wife, the Wife of my heart and soul . . . such she is in the eyes of Heaven, was, is, and ever will be such in mine." He called upon Lord Moira and Admiral Payne "to guard and protect during their lives for the sake of their departed Friend my beloved and adored Maria Fitzherbert, my Wife, in short my Second Self." Having made all the restitution possible in word and deed he desired that "the Picture of my beloved wife, my Maria Fitzherbert, may be interred with me, suspended round my neck by a ribbon as I used to wear it when I lived, and placed right upon my Heart. I likewise wish and desire and entreat of my adored Maria Fitzherbert to permit that, whenever she quits this life and is interred, my coffin should be taken up and placed next to Hers, wherever she is to be buried, and, if she has no objection, that the two inward sides of the two Coffins should be taken out,

<sup>1</sup> It is reproduced—Appendix II of this volume.

## Mrs Fitzherbert

and the two Coffins then to be soldered together, as the late King's and Queen's were."

Four years later Mrs Fitzherbert was given this Will, which she kept until her death. She made no attempt to prove it, for by then the Prince as King had made other arrangements and chosen other Executors. The only clause which was carried out referred to the Miniature, with which he really was buried.

The Prince's next step was to get rid of the Princess. The Prince's letter of dismissal was a masterpiece (April 30, 1796). It was an appeal for complete separation, and even in the event of an accident occurring to the infant Heiress to the Throne he promised to refrain "proposing at any period a connection of a more particular nature." As their inclinations were not in their power they could only part and "trust the rest of our lives will be passed in uninterrupted tranquillity." Lady Jersey was summarily dealt with and the Prince felt free to recall Mrs Fitzherbert to her conjugal duties.

This time Mrs Fitzherbert was not amenable. In vain the whole Royal Family were brought into action. In vain Jack Payne and Isabella Pigot were sent into endless pursuit. Mrs Fitzherbert felt a distinct difficulty in living with the husband of the Princess of Wales, and it was several years before she could be reconciled in any degree. She remained obdurate to entreaties and only bent to threats which were of a serious nature. He wrote her a letter, which was both serious and desperate, from Windsor Castle. She had given and withdrawn her promise to Admiral Payne to rejoin the Prince. He reproached her with this and recalled her to her marriage vows. He could not continue to endure the misery of the past five years, and if she refused to return to him he declared that he would

## The Ultimatum

proclaim the fact of their marriage,<sup>1</sup> with consequences which Mrs Fitzherbert could imagine occurring to her brother and uncle, who would be publicly convicted of a felony.

The Prince sent his final ultimatum by the hands of his brother Ernest Duke of Cumberland, writing from Windsor Castle (June 11-12, 1799) "to be delivered into her own hands only." During the night he passed through an agony of remorse, hope, and trepidation.

"Save me, save me on my knees I conjure you from myself. What! After a *solemn promise given, pledged to my brother* to be mine again, is there truth, is there honour in this world, and is it not inherent in you, Oh my friend, my friend Payne, what will you say? Was it only to *trifle* with my feelings that my *hopes were to be raised, that fortune, prospects, the only ones of life and happiness to me, were to be held out to me, because the agonies I had already suffered were not sufficient; if you wish my life you shall have it, if you break your sacred promise recollect I am freed from all ties of attachment to this World, as there is no reliance no more faith existing, I have then no fears left, nothing but honour in a world in which I have experienced nothing but misery and deceit, in return for the firmest feelings of the honestest of heart and not notwithstanding all appearance mine has ever been to me; reiterate your promise or recollect you sign yourself my doom.*"

"Wednesday morn. 4 o'clock. It is now two hours since I wrote the above, I have calmed myself and examined my heart, tis *honest and pure*, my tears are dried up, but *my resolution is fixed*. This letter preceeds me, and my brother will deliver it into *your*

<sup>1</sup> March 31, 1799. "Is it that there is a foundation for what is generally whispered, viz. that the Prince of Wales is going to declare his marriage with Mrs Fitzherbert? But what will be proposed for the Princess and her child? Shall we have the old case renewed of Henry VIII and the tables turned on the Protestants?"—*Glenbervie Diaries*.

## Mrs Fitzherbert

*own hands himself, he knows* nothing of the contents, and upon your answer through him to me in writing will depend his further ignorance or information. If your answer is conformable which God grant it may to my wishes, by assurances of your being again *mine* there is nothing in this world I will not do, and in which I will not be guided by you through every circumstance in life now and for ever. But if it is the reverse, that instant my Father and the rest of my family, shall be acquainted with the truth of my situation. As God is my judge, and as I hope to receive mercy at his hands this is my last and final determination—on my knees have I sworn it, and on my knees do I write it to you. Thus my fate now depends solely on you, Life with you; or at least a quiet conscience, which will make me face everything; I shall have liberated my own heart, cleared the character of my only beloved of my soul to the world, and by voluntarily sacrificing myself proved that I have deserved a better fate, and to have been loved by you, as I have loved you and shall every day to the last moments of my existence. The wretched experiences of the last five years have made life only desirable in one shape to me, and that is in you. I am wrapped up in you entirely; after seventeen years of a husband nothing can alter me, shake me or change me, alike yours in life or in death. The crisis is come, and tomorrow shall decide my fate, that is to say you shall and will fix my doom. If your answer is such as to restore me to life there is nothing I repeat that I will not submit to for your feelings, your delicacy, your wishes, and that I will now devote my life to prove the sincerity of my assertions; but if not, you know the consequence, therefore deceive not yourself, I must request you. My heart is now freer, the having written my letter to my Father, which I bring up with me, to dispatch instantly to him, should your answer be unfavourable, makes me feel a calm that nothing but the sense of the integrity of my motives could have inspired me with, and whatever the consequences may be I am

## The Queen Intervenes

ready to meet them, as I feel however dreadful still I am acting right by you, and punish my guilty self. And now God bless you my Maria, my only lie, my only love.

"Thine unalterably thine GEORGE P.

"Windsor Castle. June 11/12 1799.

"Think not that Payne or any advice whatever, will make me change my purpose, or *forswear my oath, thank God my witnesses are living*, your Uncle and your Brother, besides Harris<sup>1</sup> who I shall call upon, as *having been informed by me of every, even the minutest circumstance of our marriage*. Oh my heart, my heart, but I am composed and calm, whatever your answer may be, and whatever the consequences, *still my blessings with my love will ever attend thee, my Maria*.

Thy

GEORGE P."<sup>2</sup>

The Royal Family added their influence and entreaty.

"Mrs Fitzherbert showed Lady Anne Barnard a letter to her in the Queen's own handwriting pressing her to be reconciled to the Prince and written at the time of his rupture with Lady Jersey and when he affected to be or was very ill and told his sisters that he was sure he should die if a reconciliation did not take place between Mrs Fitzherbert and him. This was a strong step for so moral a Queen to take. The ostensible motive was concern for her son's health."<sup>3</sup>

Mrs Fitzherbert was in a difficulty. To reappear openly with the Prince was to label herself his mistress. Before she could give an answer she hesitated. By June, 1799, the Prince accepted her hesitation for surrender. Under this date Sir George Seymour read and noted "a letter double-underlined of joy at the

<sup>1</sup> James Harris, first Earl of Malmesbury, who had negotiated the marriage of the Prince with Princess Caroline.

<sup>2</sup> *Fitzherbert Papers*, I.

<sup>3</sup> *Glenbervie Diaries*.



## Mrs Fitzherbert

prospect of their restoration to each other. Refers to Jack Payne who was the medium."<sup>1</sup>

According to Sir George Seymour :

" Mrs Fitzherbert's reconciliation with the Prince was brought on by a repetition of the passionate entreaties on the part of H.R.H. which had originally produced their union. She was averse but not determined and on her saying that she wished to God she had a friend on whose judgment she could confide to advise her, Admiral Jack Payne encouraged his faithful servant Jephson to give his opinion, saying: he knows the circumstances. Jephson said impassively: if Mrs Fitzherbert consents to return, she will rue it all her life. Mrs Fitzherbert told me this herself."<sup>2</sup>

Mrs Fitzherbert was deeply troubled, and in her trouble she appealed to Rome. To continue in Lord Stourton's words:

" She determined to resort to the highest authorities of her own Church upon a case of such extraordinary intricacy. The Rev Mr Nassau, one of the Chaplains of Warwick Street Chapel, was therefore selected to go to Rome and lay the case before that tribunal, upon the express understanding, that, if the answer should be favourable, she would again join the Prince; if otherwise, she was determined to abandon the country. In the meantime, whilst the negotiation was pending, she obtained a promise from His Royal Highness that he would not follow her into her retreat in Wales, where she went to a small bathing place. The reply from Rome, in a Brief, which in a moment of panic she destroyed, fearful of the consequences during Mr Perceval's administration, was favourable to the wishes of the Prince; and faithful to her own determination to act as much as possible in the face of the public, she resisted all importunities to meet him clandestinely. The day on which she joined him again

<sup>1</sup> *Ragley Papers.*

<sup>2</sup> *MS note by Sir George Seymour: Ragley Papers.*

## Appeal to Rome

at her own house, was the same on which she gave a public breakfast to the whole town of London and to which he was invited."<sup>1</sup>

With the New Year the Prince wrote a letter which Sir George Seymour afterwards read and summarised :

"(January 1, 1800) A graceful letter on the commencement of the Century in which he prays she may have every earthly happiness, and that he may be permitted to be made the means of contributing his Mite towards that perfect state of blissful enjoyment of life and appeals to the Almighty for the sincerity of his wishes. Mine own own own."<sup>2</sup>

While word was coming from Rome Mrs Fitzherbert waited at Red Rice, her Uncle Errington's house in Hampshire. The Prince came down to Kempshott, his hunting box, and they met at dinner at Sir Henry Rycroft's. The Prince then and there agreed to attempt no further meeting until she had heard from Rome.

The Pope, Pius VI, died during the appeal in August, 1799, and his successor Pius VII was not elected until March, 1800. As the public reunion of Mrs Fitzherbert and the Prince took place in June, it is to be presumed that she awaited the permission<sup>3</sup> of the latter Pontiff and that the Brief, whatever it was, was issued by him. Pius VII did not enter Rome until July, having been elected at Venice. No copies of Briefs of that date are discoverable in the Roman Archives to-day. The interview with the Pope was recorded in the MS. Diary of Bishop Douglass :

"Mr Nassau had his audience of the Pope on the eighth of July: His Holiness received him with great condescension and good-nature, bade him sit down and harkened to the narrative of his business with familiar attention. The conversation was held in the Latin

<sup>1</sup> *Lord Stourton's Narrative.*

<sup>2</sup> *Ragley Papers.*

<sup>3</sup> *Permission for private intercourse.*

## Mrs Fitzherbert

language and closed with the Pope's directing him to state the case in writing. On the [erasure] Mr Nassau delivered the statement of the case in writing. His Holiness sent the statement of the case to Monsignor Pietro and to his confidential counsellors. These decided the case in favour of the [erasure]. The answer of the two confidential divines was approved by the Pope on the eighth of August. The decision was given to Mr Nassau as being the decision of His Holiness."<sup>1</sup>

This wedding breakfast, however late in time, took place on June 16, 1800. The happy couple had appeared several times together to the distress of those Catholics who were not properly informed. Lady Jerningham wrote (March 17, 1800):

"The affairs of Mrs Fitzherbert and the Prince become very incomprehensible. It is a fact that he meets her whenever he can and a conversation ensues which take them both out of the company. On Saturday, Lady Kenmare tells me, that Mrs Fitzherbert, Mrs Butler and the Prince were in a high box all night in conversation, the Princess at the Opera and also Lady Jersey. I comprehend it no longer for I had thought Mrs Fitzherbert a woman of principle."<sup>2</sup>

Mrs Fitzherbert followed her religious practices quietly, and the faithful could make what conclusions they wished. Catholics such as the Kenmares and the George Jerninghams had no scruples in attending the famous breakfast. And in the next month Lady Jerningham attended a breakfast given by the Duchess of Devonshire (July 7, 1800):

"We found the Duchess sitting with Mrs Fitzherbert by an urn. . . . The Prince was *en polisson*, a brown dress, round hat and a brown wig. He stood almost the whole time by his band with Dr Burney ordering different pieces of music. Lady Jersey was

<sup>1</sup> *Archives of the Archdiocese of Westminster.*

<sup>2</sup> *Jerningham Letters.*

## The Princess of Wales

casting round the spot where he stood with her daughters. The Prince was quite annoyed with her and eyed her askance; but she is resolved to plague him."

As for the Princess of Wales, there had been some manœuvres by Jack Payne described in a letter of Lady Minto after a visit to the Princess (October 14, 1799) :

"There has been a sort of sounding by means of Jack Payne and a proposal from Mrs Fitzherbert of seeing her, saying she had such power over the Prince she could do what she pleased with him. The Princess replied, most properly, that she would not see Mrs Fitzherbert and that if the Prince ever knew Mrs Fitzherbert had proposed it, it would only give him offence. Jack Payne likewise asked her if she would object to dining with the Prince at Carlton House. . . . It was actually proposed to the Princess by a *gentleman* that Her Royal Highness should receive a visit from the said Lady in order that she might exert her influence with the husband on behalf of the wife. No wonder that on being told this by the Princess, George Canning started from his chair in indignation at such impudence."

Before the end of 1799 the Prince had given her his Will :

"As to the Paper I have put into your hands, it was with no view of distressing your feelings that I entrusted it to you. That I wished you to be acquainted with the contents I most certainly did, and next to the relief I felt when I had finished it, and which certainly did restore me in a manner to life after a precarious and most dangerous illness, the greatest relief to my heart would be the knowing that you had perused it. . . . Think not, my Angel, that there is one unkind expression about you contained in the whole of it, so, believe me, nothing could be further from the writer's heart and mind both then and now (though it is now within a few days of four years since it was

## Mrs Fitzherbert

written) and indeed at all times, than a thought of that nature. How I have ever loved and adored you, God only knows and how I do *now*. He also knows and you cannot pretend to be ignorant of or disbelieve. I have no secrets from you."<sup>1</sup>

The best sign of the Prince's happiness was his renewed respect towards the King. No doubt she was at the back of the affectionate correspondence which passed at this time, for the King's letter and the draft of the Prince's reply remained in her possession. They were later read and summarised by Sir George Seymour:

"From King George III (June 8, 1800)

"Says he has read in the minutes of the House of Lords a complaint of Lord Carlisle. He thinks it would have a bad effect if the Prince joins in supporting the complaint as it is meant against the Lord Chief Justice in his judicial capacity 'but if truly stated only condemning' opinions which wherever broached are those of men of loose principles not those worthy of commendation or adoption. The majority of this country, however custom may have weakened the opinion of some men, view the conduct of the Lord Chief Justice in its true light as that of a worthy and upright man wishing to support the laws of religion and of his country and consequently would feel particularly hurt, as well as myself, if any of my family could countenance this attack I am certain it cannot be necessary for me to add more than that I wish you should ever hold that conduct which may make you respected and that I ever remain, my dear Son, your most affec Father G. R."

There were also:

"Three letters from the Prince of Wales to King George III copied by the Prince himself.

"Says in answer he shall always deem an intimation from His Majesty as a command instantly to be

<sup>1</sup> *Fitzherbert Papers*, I.

## Financial Difficulties

obeyed. Of course he need not add he shall not attend the Debate expected on the subject. Signed Your most affectionate and most dutiful son and subject G. P."

Mrs Fitzherbert scarcely enjoyed the famous Breakfast. Lord Stourton continued :

" She told me, she hardly knew how she could summon resolution to pass that severe ordeal, but she thanked God she had the courage to do so. The next eight years were, she said, the happiest of her connection with the Prince. She used to say that they were extremely poor, but as merry as crickets, and as a proof of their poverty, she told me that once, on their returning to Brighton from London, they mustered their common means, and could not raise £5 between them. Upon this, or upon some such occasion, she related to me, that an old and faithful servant endeavoured to force them to accept £60, which he said he had accumulated in the service of the best of Masters and Mistresses. She added, however, that even this period, the happiest of their lives, was much embittered by the numerous political difficulties which frequently surrounded the Prince, and she particularly alluded to what has been termed ' the delicate investigation ' in which Queen Caroline and His Royal Highness had been concerned.

" Sometimes family jealousies, as in the case of the Duke of York, in the Prince's letter to the King, were subjects of great anxiety, in which she always endeavoured to heal any differences which occurred. Indeed, she said that the two Princes were much attached to each other though the Prince of Wales was frequently jealous of the superior attentions the Duke of York received from their Royal Father, but through life the Duke had always acted ' beautifully,' to use her own expression.

" Upon one occasion, not long before his death, in alluding to the delicate connection existing between his brother and Mrs Fitzherbert, and the political

## Mrs Fitzherbert

consequences it might involve, he said: Thank God he never could wish to raise any claim in contravention of the rights of his brother. It was, however, only in the latter part of his life that he had seen the mutilated document which I have termed the Certificate of the Marriage."<sup>1</sup>

After her desertion Mrs Fitzherbert had lived at Castle Hill, a Villa in Ealing, then fair country-side. In 1798 this Villa was conveniently purchased from her by the Duke of Kent who became another of her Royal friends and confidants, as his surviving letters to her show. He had not yet begotten the Princess who became Queen Victoria. In 1800 Mrs Fitzherbert went to live at East End House, Parsons Green, a house which was burnt down in 1884.

The Royal Family were convinced that it was better for the Prince's health and welfare, purse, and sanity, that he should remain attached to Mrs Fitzherbert than ruin himself upon a succession of Perditas and Lady Jerseys. The little Princess Charlotte grew up betwixt alienated parents, and there was a struggle to possess and educate her as a future Queen. "The two factions," wrote Lord Malmesbury, "pulled the Prince of Wales different ways. Ladies Moira, Hutchinson, and Mrs Fitzherbert were for his ceding the child to the King: the Duke of Clarence and Devonshire House most violent against it and the Prince ever inclined to the faction he saw last. In the Devonshire House cabal Lady Melbourne and Mrs Fox act conspicuous parts: so that the alternative for our future Queen seems to be whether Mrs Fox or Mrs Fitzherbert shall have the ascendancy."

The Prince and Mrs Fitzherbert were lovers again. Sir Harry Englefield wrote to Miss Berry (February 18, 1803): "My neighbours here go on most lovingly. The affection seems to grow with their growth and

<sup>1</sup> *Lord Stourton's Narrative.*

## The Duchess of York

fatten with their fat."<sup>1</sup> It is curious that Mrs Fitzherbert still wished to become a conciliatory influence between the Prince and the Princess. Lady Bessborough wrote to Lord Granville (November 24, 1804):

"I do not know what to do with the Prince and Princess of Wales. Hetty [Lady Hester Stanhope] tells me the Princess is ready to do anything that can please him and if he dislikes her interviews with his Father will decline or go away to avoid them, if she could only have the satisfaction of knowing from him that it would please him. Just after hearing this I found the Prince's *Fat Friend* was all anxiety to send a message to the Princess, if she could find anybody to take it, telling her that if she had no objection to confide to the Prince the subjects of those conversations and would do so as of her own accord, it would bring about not only reconciliation with him, but complete submission to all his Father's wishes. But how can this be made known? Not through me, I am sure for the only person I could tell it to—Hetty—I cannot write to."<sup>2</sup>

The new Duchess of York was already Royal, and unlike the Duchesses of Cumberland and Gloucester she was inclined to tilt her nose at Mrs Fitzherbert. As early as 1792 Lord Malmesbury recorded that "Mrs Fitzherbert dislikes the Duchess of York because she will not treat her *en belle sœur*. It is that which is the cause of the coolness between the brothers."

And the trouble continued, for (May 25, 1803):

"Duke of York came to me. Uneasy lest the Duchess should be forced to sup at the same table with Mrs Fitzherbert at the Ball to be given by the Knights of the Bath. Says the King and Queen will not hear of it. On the other side he wishes to keep on terms with the Prince. I say I will see Lord

<sup>1</sup> *Berry Correspondence*.

<sup>2</sup> *Granville Papers*.



## Mrs Fitzherbert

Henley, and try to manage so that there shall be two distinct tables."<sup>1</sup>

The Prince tried in every way to make up for his desertion of the past.

"The greatest interruptions to their happiness at that period were his bitter and passionate regrets and self-accusations for his conduct, which she always met by saying: we must look to the present and the future and not think of the past."<sup>2</sup>

For her birthday he sent her a present and a nice note (July 26, 1803):

"The tribute of the truest and purest affection on this day; which day has been, and ever will be, the source of *all happiness* to me

"ever your own, own, own, GEORGE P."<sup>3</sup>

In the Hon Mrs Calvert's Journals (*An Irish Beauty of the Regency*) are a number of references to Mrs Fitzherbert. Writing of a Party or "Assembly" which she gave in London (May, 1804):

"The King being pronounced well, I invited His Royal Highness and he came. He and Mrs Fitzherbert were the last people in the house and I was much surprised at their going away in the same carriage, but that, I found afterwards, they always did."

<sup>1</sup> *Lord Malmesbury's Diaries.*

<sup>2</sup> *Lord Stourton's Narrative.*

<sup>3</sup> *Swynnerton Papers.*

## CHAPTER VI

"It is the fashion to run down George IV, but what myriads of Londoners ought to thank him for inventing Brighton."—LEWIS MELVILLE.

While round the course or through the shining Steine  
Trained to her side a princely prize is seen  
To catch with smiles her glances as they fly  
And search for lustre in her hollowed eye,  
Still crowds will gaze, still Brighthelmstone will shout  
Still titled Ladies throng her envied rout."

(*Lady Anne Hamilton on Mrs Fitzherbert in "Epics of the Ton."*)

THE reunited couple had sought happiness and found it together at Brighton. Here he could forget the enmity of the King, the shrill disapproval of the Queen, and the uncouth Princess in the background. Mrs Fitzherbert's earlier house was pulled down during the improvements made to the Pavilion, and a new home built for her in 1803 on the Steyne.

Mr Bolton's account of the *Architecture of Robert and James Adam* exhibits the Adam plans for Mrs Fitzherbert's House which was to take the place of a pretty modest villa close to the Pavilion, a little house with green shutters, and separated from it by a strip of garden.

The passing of her first house was recorded by the *Sussex Weekly Advertiser* (January 5, 1801):

"The house some years since erected for the residence of Mrs Fitzherbert is to be taken down to make room for the addition of a newer wing to the Pavilion."

From the first, Mrs Fitzherbert had insisted on occupying a separate residence from the Prince. The only nights she ever spent in the Pavilion were during his illness of 1804 when she remained to nurse him.

## Mrs Fitzherbert

The new house was built by William Porden, and the Adam plans passed into the Soane Museum, whence they were drawn by Mr Arthur Bolton to illustrate his aforesaid book. The first conception of Porden was in the Egyptian style and was happily blown down in the wind of 1805. By the end of the year an Italian villa had taken its place which was engraved and published by Suttaby (October 25, 1825). The entrance was not as now on the front, but on the side in Steine Lane. On the Lane side was the Chapel which accommodated Catholic worshippers until the refugees built their own. Mr J. Gibney wrote to Dr Plunkett, Bishop of Kildare (September 10, 1810) "describing the French Catholic Chapel there: Mrs Fitzherbert's residence: and the coolness that had taken place between herself and the Prince."<sup>1</sup>

As a local historian wrote:

"The improvements which His Royal Highness has made and is still projecting and the elegant house which Porden, an architect of uncommon merit, is raising for Mrs Fitzherbert will, I trust, check the listless torpor and selfless apathy which has too long prevailed at Brighton, and reflect a certain taste and liberality on the sordid natives of this lawless waste."

Whether the architecture of the Pavilion was sufficient to civilise the sordid natives as the historian hoped or not, the flow of society and fashion never ceased. A new city began to arise under the shadow of the minarets and domes with which Brighton must be ever associated. The most tactful mention of the Pavilion was written by a French traveller, Charles Nodier, who observed that it had been "constructed in the Oriental style and probably on the plan of some building in India. There is not much harmony between this Eastern style and the surrounding houses, but it is

<sup>1</sup> *Cogan's Diocese of Meath.*



MRS FITZHERBERT  
From the painting by George Romney.  
By permission of the Earl Manners.



## Divine Worship

the mark of a power which stretches its sceptre over a part of the East."

The old Church of St Nicholas was now rivalled by the new Church on the Steyne level from which the Royal Standard was flown to denote Royal occupation of the Pavilion, while guns captured from a French ship fired Royal Salutes. It is pleasant to record in the Press (April 24, 1803) that "the example which the Nobility set here to the lower order of people by attending divine worship on a Sunday is productive of the most salutary effect and the most decorous solemnity prevails throughout the town." Mrs Fitzherbert, of course, attended the new and temporary Catholic Church. There was a Chapel Royal in which the Archbishop of Canterbury preached in October, 1802. On that occasion "Captain Bloomfield was in the Prince's pew." Bloomfield took the place of Jack Payne as the Prince's secretary.

The life of Mrs Fitzherbert is fairly well known during this period. There were many gossipers and scribblers visiting Brighton. Her name slips into a hundred books of Memoirs. Although she kept no diary, there are few diaries of the time which do not give her memory a page or a corner. The preposterous but amusing old Creevey received an invitation to dine in September, 1805, at the Pavilion and wrote:

"Mrs Fitzherbert whom I had never been in a room with before, sat on one side of the Prince, and the Duke of Clarence on the other. . . . In the course of the evening the Prince took me up to the card-table where Mrs Fitzherbert was playing and said: Mrs Fitzherbert, I wish you would call upon Mrs Creevey and say from me I shall be happy to see her here. Mrs Fitzherbert did call accordingly and, although she and Mrs Creevey had never seen each other before, an acquaintance began which soon grew into a very sin-

## Mrs Fitzherbert

cere and agreeable friendship, which lasted the remainder of Mrs. Creevey's life. . . . During those months the Prince behaved with the greatest good humour. Indeed I have heard him say repeatedly during that time that he never should be so happy when King, as he was then."<sup>1</sup>

Mrs Fitzherbert not only called, but wrote to Mrs Creevey (November 6, 1805):

"Dear Madam, The Prince has this moment received an account from the Admiralty of the death of poor Lord Nelson, which has affected him most extremely. I think you may wish to know the news, which upon any other occasion might be called a glorious victory—twenty out of three and thirty of the enemy's fleet being entirely destroyed—no English ship being taken or sunk—Captains Duff and Cook both killed and the French Admiral Villeneuve taken prisoner. Poor Lord Nelson received his death by a shot of a musket from the enemy's ship upon his shoulder and expired two hours after, but not till the ship struck and afterwards sunk, which he had the consolation of hearing, as well as his complete victory before he died. Excuse this hurried scrawl. I am so nervous I scarcely can hold my pen. God bless you."<sup>2</sup>

Mrs Creevey wrote many letters to Mr Creevey describing the interest and grandeur of life at the Pavilion:

"Mrs Fitzherbert always dined there and mostly one other lady—Lady Downshire very often, sometimes Lady Clare or Lady Berkeley or Mrs Creevey. Mrs Fitzherbert was a great card-player and played every night. The Prince never touched a card but was occupied in talking to his guests and very much in listening to and giving directions to the band. . . .

"It used to be the Duke of Norfolk's custom to come over every year from Arundel to pay his respects to the Prince and to stay two days at Brighton,

<sup>1</sup> *Creevey Papers.*

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

## The Unfortunate Russian

both of which he always dined at the Pavilion. In the year 1804 upon this annual visit the Prince had drunk so much as to be made very seriously ill by it so that in 1805 when the Duke came, Mrs Fitzherbert, who was always the Prince's best friend, was very much afraid of his being again made ill and she persuaded the Prince to adopt different stratagems to avoid drinking with the Duke. I dined there on both days and letters were brought in each day after dinner to the Prince, which he affected to consider of great importance and so went out to answer them while the Duke of Clarence went on drinking with the Duke of Norfolk. . . .

"(November 3, 1805) Mrs Fitzherbert shone last night very much in a sketch she gave me of the history of a very rich Russian woman of quality who is coming to Lord Berkeley's house. She has been long in England and is I suppose generally known in London though new to me. She was a married woman with children and of great consequence at the Court of Petersburg when Lord Whitworth was there some years ago. He was poor and handsome—she rich and in love with him, and tired of a very magnificent husband to whom she had been married at 14 years old. In short she kept my Lord and spent immense sums in doing so and gratifying his great extravagance. In the midst of all this he returned to England but they corresponded and she left her husband and her country to come to him, expecting to marry him—got as far as Berlin and there heard he was married to the Duchess of Dorset.<sup>1</sup> She was raving mad for some time and Mrs Fitzherbert describes her as being often nearly so now, but at other times most interesting and most miserable. Her husband and children come to England to visit her and Mrs Fitzherbert says she is an eternal subject of remorse to Lord Whitworth

<sup>1</sup> Lord Whitworth married the widow of the third Duke of Dorset and became Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. Whether he was as bad as Mrs Fitzherbert painted or not, he brought no luck to his bride, whose son, the fourth Duke, was tempted to hunt in Ireland from the Vice-regal lodge and was killed by a fall from his horse in 1815.



## Mrs Fitzherbert

whom she spoke of in warm terms as a monster and said she could tell me far more to make me think so. The story sometimes hit upon points that made her blush and check herself, which was to me not the least interesting part of it. . . .

“(November 5, 1805) My head is very bad I suppose with the heat of the Pavilion last night. We were there before Mrs Fitzherbert came and it almost made her faint, but she put on no airs to be interesting and soon recovered and I had a great deal of comfortable prose with her. . . . Lady Downshire soon came and did not help conversation—then came Gruff<sup>1</sup> and Mrs Fitzherbert and soon afterwards the men from the dining room. The Prince told Mrs Fitzherbert he would not have any more, lest they should disturb her. . . . Before she came, he was talking of the fineness of the day and said: But I was not out. I went to Mrs Fitzherbert’s at one o’clock and stayed talking with her till past 6 which was certainly very *unfashionable*. Now was he not at that moment thinking of her as his lawful wife? for in no other sense could he call it *unfashionable*.”

(November 8, 1805) “The first of my visits this morning was to my Mistress. . . . I found her alone and she was excellent—gave me an account of the Prince’s grief about Lord Nelson and then entered into the domestic failings of the latter in a way infinitely creditable to her and skilful too. She was all for Lady Nelson and against Lady Hamilton, who, she said (hero as he was) overpowered him and took possession of him quite by force. But she ended in a natural good way by saying: Poor creature! I am sorry for her now, for I suppose she is in grief.

“. . . Mrs Fitzherbert came before 12 and has literally only this moment left me. We have been all the time alone and she has been confidential to a degree that almost frightens me and that I can hardly think sufficiently accounted for by her professing in the strongest terms to have liked me more and more every

<sup>1</sup> Lord Chancellor Thurlow.

## The Races

time she has seen me . . . so much in excuse for her telling me the history of her life and dwelling more particularly on the explanation of all her feelings and conduct towards the Prince. If she is as *true* as I think she is *wise*, she is an extraordinary person and most worthy to be beloved. It was quite impossible to keep clear of Devonshire House and there her opinions are *all* precisely mine and yours and what is better, she says they are *now* the Prince's: that he knows everything—above all, how money is made by promises, unauthorised by him, in the event of his having power: that he knows how his character is involved in various transactions of that House and that he only goes into it from motives of compassion and old friendship when he is persecuted to do so. In short, he tells Mrs Fitzherbert all he sees and hears, shews her all the Duchess' letters and notes and she says she knows the Duchess hates her. . . ."<sup>1</sup>

In July, 1806, Lady Jerningham had arrived at "un-social Brighton where a tree is not to be perceived and where (as Wilkes says of Scotland) Judas must have survived his desperate intention. Races were being held and a great number of gentlemen are arrived to pay court to the Prince who protects these Races. He was on the course on the Box of his barouche: Mrs Fitzherbert in another carriage and four with her brothers and other gentlemen—the two Barouches standing by each other and the Prince frequently in conversation with her from his Box."<sup>2</sup>

Racing was not an occupation on Mrs Fitzherbert's black-list, for she encouraged any outdoor sport. As a relic of the Prince's racing days there survives a note:

*"Monsieur de Lauzun arrivé de Newmarket a l'honneur d'envoyer à Madame Fitzherbert un mot dont Monseigneur le Prince de Galles l'a chargé pour*

<sup>1</sup> *Craevey Papers.*

<sup>2</sup> *Jerningham Letters.*

## Mrs Fitzherbert

*lui apprehendre que son cheval a gagné. Monsieur de Lauzun a l'honneur de présenter ses respectueux hommages à Madame Fitzherbert. Lundi au soir.*"<sup>1</sup>

This period of Mrs Fitzherbert's Life was much agitated by a unique Case which came before the House of Lords called "the Seymour Case." Mrs Fitzherbert's happiness was entirely wrapped in its results. In fact, the rest of her life pivoted upon the care and custody of a child, Mary Emma Georgiana Seymour, whom she believed had been bequeathed to her by her dying mother, Lady Horatia Seymour, wife of Lord Hugh Seymour, fifth son of the first Marquess of Hertford.

All Mrs Fitzherbert's affections and interests were showered upon this child who grew up to be an adored and adorable companion. In her she found consolation for the sorrows and difficulties of her life and above all for her sense of frustrated motherhood.

Minney Seymour was a well-connected little personage, as her Pedigree will show. Sir Robert Walpole, the Prime Minister, begat Sir Edward Walpole who had a love affair with a beautiful milliner called Dorothy Clement. An illegitimate daughter, Maria, married the second Lord Waldegrave and bore the three beautiful Waldegraves who were the subject of Sir Joshua's famous picture. The three became Laura Lady Waldegrave, Charlotte Lady Euston, and Lady Horatia Seymour.

Lady Waldegrave, their mother, married as a widow William Henry, Duke of Gloucester, brother of King George III, who was very angry to find the illegitimate daughter of a beautiful milliner had become his sister-in-law. However, he later allowed Lady Waldegrave's

<sup>1</sup> "M de Lauzun has arrived from Newmarket and has the honour to send the word the Prince of Wales has instructed him with, to let her know his horse has won. M de Lauzun has the honour of presenting his respectful homage to Mrs Fitzherbert. Monday evening." *Mrs Dawson-Damer's Autograph Book*

## Lord Hugh Seymour

son by his brother to marry his daughter, the Princess Mary.

Lady Horatia married Lord Hugh Seymour (Conway) and in the intervals of his naval duties bore him seven children. Minney Seymour was the youngest.

In Hugh Seymour the Prince had once found the friend intended by his good angels. In him he confided his schemes and sorrows, and to attach his person made him Master of the Robes and Keeper of the Privy Purse. The Prince gave Lord Hugh a gold watch, a steel sword, and a ring with his likeness. To the Prince Lord Hugh left his sword before going into battle as a token of his love. Their correspondence was "truly affectionately." How courtly was the Postscript which the budding "First Gentleman in Europe" added to a letter scribbled from Newmarket (April 18, 1785):

"I find, my dear Hugh, I have written to you upon a half-sheet of paper instead of a whole one. I hope you will excuse the great incivility, but I am really too Georgelike *alias* lazy to write it over again."<sup>1</sup>

The Prince had once two good and honourable friends so intimate that he could confide everything to them, Lord Hugh and Admiral Payne. Both were sailors and both fought on the Glorious First of June of 1794, but there was one great difference in the two friends. Lord Hugh was not afraid to bide by his opinions nor hesitate to give unpalatable advice when he thought it better for the Prince.

Lord Hugh married Lady Horatia in the year following the Prince's marriage with Mrs Fitzherbert. The two couples became the greatest friends, and the secret marriage of the Prince was revealed to the Seymours. They came to sympathise with Mrs Fitzherbert's difficulties and to appreciate her character. The Prince's

<sup>1</sup> *Ragley Papers.*

## Mrs Fitzherbert

letters over-bubbled with friendship and he wrote: "my dearest Mrs Fitzherbert desires her best love to Lady Racey and you."

Lord Hugh returned from playing a signal part in the Battle of "the Glorious First of June." Commanding the *Leviathan* he had silenced *l'America* with his guns. He now found that the Prince had deserted Mrs Fitzherbert in May. He protested against the Prince's behaviour and Lady Racey was not disposed to give up her friendship with Mrs Fitzherbert. Lord Hugh was a member of the Prince's Household and realised the course on which the Prince was set. He acted as an interpreter between the Prince's wishes and Mrs Fitzherbert's grief.

In duty bound Lord Hugh attended the melancholy and unfeeling ceremony of the Prince's marriage to Princess Caroline, but the friends never met again.

Lord Hugh returned to sea and according to Mr Wilkins he resigned his offices in the Prince's Household. This was not the exact truth. Lord Hugh was anxious to obtain a seat on the Board of Admiralty. Some were anxious to use his position with the Prince to prevent this promotion. The position of Master of the Robes was found conformable with an Admiralty post when the Prince suddenly changed him to Lord of the Bedchamber. Lord Hertford protested on behalf of his brother to the Prince, who insisted that it was a promotion and that there was no need for him to offer explanations or apology. But there can be little doubt that the Prince had changed his position owing to the coolness that had arisen over Mrs Fitzherbert. While Lord Hugh counselled Mrs Fitzherbert to follow the Prince's wishes (for there was nothing else to be done), he did not allow the Prince to remain in ignorance of his own disgust. He thought the Prince had forfeited his honour in dismissing a woman who was his wife and had no means of defence save by

## Adoption of Mary Seymour

breaking her own most sacred word. In June, 1795, Lord Hugh, while at sea, received news of his dismissal from the Prince's Household.

Soon after her youngest child was born (November 23, 1798) Lady Horatia was compelled to go abroad for her health and asked Mrs Fitzherbert to look after her child temporarily. But "Lord Hugh and Lady Horatia's simultaneous deaths in 1801 occasioned Miss Seymour's residence with Mrs Fitzherbert to be permanent instead of temporary as they intended."<sup>1</sup>

While Lady Horatia was waiting to go abroad for her health's sake she wrote her troubles to Mrs Fitzherbert, who was at Bath. Mrs Fitzherbert, who had been prevented from ever playing a mother's part, immediately suggested taking the baby off Lady Horatia's hands. Lady Horatia answered: "the letter I received from you was just like yourself, everything that is kind, good, friendly, and comfortable to one's feelings." She begged her to meet her at Portsmouth to talk it all over. For the time she wished little Mary to remain with her nurse: "I know very well that the instant her little finger ached, you would be frightened and make yourself ill."

Three years later, when the Seymour Case was raging, Lady Euston wrote the Attorney-General (December 13, 1804) what she remembered of Mrs Fitzherbert's visit in 1799.

"The morning that Mrs Fitzherbert left Portsmouth, I went into Lady Horatia's room by her desire to tell her she wished to see her before she went. Lady Horatia seemed much flurried and said once or twice: I can't see her—do tell her so. I thought this odd and hesitated. She then said: I will write a note but I can't see her. She wrote a note which I believe was in the words which Mrs Fitzherbert mentioned. After Mrs Fitzherbert was gone, Lady Horatia came

<sup>1</sup> *MS Note by Sir George Seymour: Ragley Papers.*

## Mrs Fitzherbert

out of her room and appeared very low and much agitated; after some time she told me how much Mrs Fitzherbert had distressed her by talking to her about the Prince of Wales—so much so that it was then that the conversation passed between us relating to Miss Mary. Nothing could be stronger than Lady Horatia's expressions upon the subject. She said that she could not bear to listen to Mrs Fitzherbert or to suppose it was possible that she should ever be reconciled to the Prince, that she might have deceived herself formerly as to the nature of their connection, but that she would now be guilty with her eyes open when all the world must condemn her. She said that much had been done to influence Mrs Fitzherbert's mind and mentioned some very extraordinary circumstances; therefore says she: I can conceive that her talk of her love for the Prince which after all she has told me is impossible, and which would hardly be excusable in a girl just escaped from her nursery. And she once or twice said: I know she would not have the courage to be reconciled to him if Hugh and I remained in England, but left to herself there is no answering for what she may do."<sup>1</sup>

Mrs Fitzherbert left Bath for Portsmouth and pleaded to be allowed to take the child. Both parents agreed to allow her and sailed, leaving Mrs Fitzherbert overjoyed at the prospect. Lady Horatia wrote to her after sailing:

"I have written to Lady George Seymour to tell her that little Mary is to be your child. There never was anything so kind and good as yourself, but it is impossible for me to express everything that I feel about you."

Mrs Fitzherbert had received the custody of the child in 1799. According to Sir George Seymour:

"Lady Horatia left her youngest daughter with Lady George Seymour and the child was subsequently

<sup>1</sup> *Ragley Papers.*

## The Measels

transferred to Mrs Fitzherbert, who kindly repeated her offer to take charge of her on account of the other children catching the measles."<sup>1</sup>

That Lord Hugh should permit his infant child to remain with Mrs Fitzherbert showed that he respected her character. He was a Moralist in his way, for he disapproved "the system of mistresses going to sea." In fact he stopped the captains of Frigates taking their French ladies with them.

Whatever Lady Horatia promised or wrote, Lord Hugh had the decision in law. Leaving his wife in Madeira he returned to England, writing to her:

"Mary is still with Lady George Seymour, who is as averse to parting with her as Mrs Fitzherbert is anxious to charge herself with her. A very severe illness, which our friend has had, has rather tended to delay the arrangements on that subject, but I hope when I am in town to settle it in the way which will be the most agreeable to you and the most advantageous to the dear little woman concerned." Then came the fortunate outbreak of measles and "there is another reason for the separation, Lady George having been on last Friday brought to bed of another boy."<sup>2</sup>

It appears that Mrs Fitzherbert was only promised the child, should Lady George find it impossible to bring her up. The mother wrote to Lady Euston: "poor dear Mrs Fitzherbert! I had not the heart to tell her if I had a thousand daughters, I could not let her educate one."

But she accepted the situation when she wrote home (October 3, 1800):

"So that will be better, if Mary has not left Mrs Fitzherbert, that she should remain with her till my return to England or that any other plan at this time should prevent my coming. I only make a point that Anne [the nurse] should have the care of her."

<sup>1</sup> *Ragley Papers.*

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*



## Mrs Fitzherbert

Lord Hugh had been an ardent champion of Mrs Fitzherbert. He thought she should not return to the Prince, and he had resented Admiral Payne's proposals to her and let his own feelings find noble expression in one of his last letters to his dying wife :

" Mrs Fitzherbert only does me justice when she says that I was her true friend and it is as true that she was driven to be glad when I was gone, but she hardly can call me her comforter on that occasion, for she, poor soul, did not dare consult me, and I saw so clearly what was going on, that tho' I heartily wished her removed from the intrigues which were intended to effect what her character disapproved, that I could not bring myself to *entamer* the subject which I then knew made her wretched—loving her as I do, and have long done, it is impossible that I should not enter into her feelings and pity her for the cruel trials to which they with her resolution have been put, a trial in which I believe means have been used which never have before been brought into effect where a pretension to sentiment or morality existed. I cannot [imagine] what Jacko is about or guess the object he can have in saying coarse things to a person he professes to love; it is very little his nature or habit to indulge in the use of them and I therefore attribute the cruel speech he made to her respecting new Lovers [as due to] the feverishness arising from his bad health or some momentary anger towards her, though neither of these will warrant the expression he made use of and which though she may forgive she can never forget. I have opened all the letters addressed to my dearest but I have not discovered any from [the Prince] whose handwriting I only recollect to [have] seen as a PS to a letter of Mrs Fitzherbert which I think you received before you left Jamaica."<sup>1</sup>

The two friends had parted practically for ever. After two years she returned, but only to die a month later at Wells (July 12, 1801). Every day Minney was sent

<sup>1</sup> *Ragley Papers.*

## Struggle for Minney

from Mrs Fitzherbert's to see her mother. In the following September Lord Hugh died in Jamaica and Minney Seymour was an orphan indeed.

The moment the parents were dead, there began a struggle for the retention of Minney. Lord Hugh had confided his other children to his sisters and brothers, but Minney was not mentioned in his Will. Lord Hugh knew well that Mrs Fitzherbert was beyond reproach, but the world *did not*, and was the world to point the finger at the proud House of Seymour if a younger daughter was lent or loaned to the mistress of a Prince?

This was the natural thought of the family, for Lord Euston wrote to Lord Henry Seymour (November 23, 1801):

"Lady Waldegrave has proposed taking care of the two little girls, Horatia and Mary, as soon as it may be convenient to Mrs Fitzherbert to wean herself from the latter, of whom she has at present the care, as she has had ever since the child was born. I am aware that it may be an unpleasant proposal to make to Mrs Fitzherbert, who, I really believe, is much attached to the child, but perhaps it may be fortunate that there is so good a reason for removing her from what hereafter might be thought an improper education."

Mrs Fitzherbert's Religion was made the immediate excuse for removing the child. The real reason could not have been mentioned to her even by so blunt a mediator as "Jacko" Payne. It was her alleged intimacy with the Prince.

Mrs Fitzherbert implored the Executors to allow the child to remain until she was a little older and they consented that Minney should remain with her for another year until June, 1803. But doubtless they felt that the girl would have no chance of marriage if she came out in Society under the slandered patronage of the Prince's lady.

## Mrs Fitzherbert

In the months that remained a new and potent influence entered the arena. The Prince had become deeply attached to Minney with whom he played every time that he visited Mrs Fitzherbert. He felt an overwhelming pity for Mrs Fitzherbert's distress. Had it not been for his exalted position she might be enjoying the pleasures of bringing up children of her own. He was determined that this child should not be torn from her and he prepared himself to go all lengths.

In the meantime it must be acknowledged that his mind had conceived an idea, which remained with him till the end of his life, that Minney was his own daughter: not by Mrs Fitzherbert (as has been believed), but by her mother, Lady Horatia Seymour. There is nothing to give this idea the least proof. The Seymours were more accustomed to provide the Royal Family with Queens than with mistresses.

On the other hand the devotion of Hugh and Horatia Seymour to each other was well known and her chastity was established. It seems sufficient to leave Minney's Royal connections with a Maternal Grandmother (H.R.H. the Duchess of Gloucester) as was pompously stated in Court during the Seymour Case as well as with "a Maternal Uncle and Aunt of the half-blood in their Highnesses Prince William and Princess Sophia of Gloucester."

The Prince had a singular imagination. In later years he believed he had led a Cavalry charge at the Battle of Salamanca and frequently called on the Duke of Wellington to corroborate his exploits at Waterloo. The Duke of Wellington "accounted for it from Lord Londonderry giving his health as the best cavalry officer in Europe. He got to believe that the system he had introduced conduced to the part the cavalry played in that action: finally, that he had been there. The Duke said that the first stage was one of delusion, the next of falsehood, and the last of insanity."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *C. K. Sharpe's Journals.*

## The Prince and Minney

He could easily believe himself the father of Minney Seymour. A good many people believed it and she used to find it embarrassing when travelling on the Continent to be taken for the King's daughter. The great friendship between Mrs Fitzherbert and Lady Horatia was security against any advances having been made by the Prince. The Prince had a daughter of his own whom he could not help disliking for her mother's sake. No doubt he would have worshipped any daughter given him by Mrs Fitzherbert. Minney Seymour, as her adopted daughter, was the next best thing and he gradually assumed that any creature so prepossessing must have originated with himself.

To retain her in Mrs Fitzherbert's care he entered into correspondence with Lord Euston (later Duke of Grafton), who, with Lord Henry Seymour, was Minney's legal guardian under Lord Hugh's Will, offering to show kindness to all his children and especially to his little favourite. He quickly advanced a series of proposals on her behalf which the Guardians met with exquisite courtesy, but undeviating refusal. He wrote to Lord Euston that he wished to bring her up as a companion to his own daughter, the Princess Royal and heiress to the Throne.

Brighton (September 10, 1802)

"I take up my Pen, my dear Lord, to acknowledge your kind Letter, which I should already have done but it only reach'd me since my return to this Place; and likewise to return you my sincere thanks for the very obliging manner in which you have been so good as to communicate to me, the remembrance of our much lamented Friend Hugh. I certainly shall ever value that testimony of his regard and shall ever endeavour to prove the sense I have of it, by any mark of kindness I may have it in my power to shew at any time to any of his children, and particularly to my little favorite Minney, who I have the pleasure to tell you is in most perfect health, improves daily and is the most

## Mrs Fitzherbert

delightful Child in the World, though I am well aware that none of them can want Protectors, under such good guardianship, as yours and that of Lord Henry. I am extremely sorry that when I was in town a few days ago, I did not know of the circumstance, or I should have immediately appointed Mr Ward<sup>1</sup> to have called upon me at Carlton House; the eulogium you give that gentleman I understand he most deservedly merits and I certainly will take the earliest opportunity of seeing him when I next pass through London."

### PROPOSAL

"The Prince of Wales being fully convinced, that the welfare and happiness of the Child, are essentially dependant on her continuance under the care of Mrs Fitzherbert; and it appearing by the evidence before the Master, that she cannot be removed without injury to her health and peril of her life; he feels it an indispensable part of the parental duty he so solemnly engaged to her dying mother to fulfil, to protect her to the utmost of his power, in her present happy situation; and therefore nothing short of a stipulation, that she shall remain there unmolested until she shall be of an age to chuse for herself, will satisfy his mind.

"If this shall be assented to on the part of her family; the Prince in furtherance of his designs in her favor and to obviate the exceptions that have been taken to the Instrument he has already executed; intends speedily to invest the sum of £10,000 in the Funds as well to answer the provision intended to be secured by that Instrument, as to add to it by the accumulation of the Interest during her Minority.

"The Prince scruples not to declare his ultimate view to be to raise her up hereafter as a companion and as he hopes, a bosom friend of his own daughter; to warrant these views, it is absolutely necessary, that she should be bred and educated under his own eye; her family must therefore perceive, that he has a deeper interest than they have, in her becoming a

<sup>1</sup> Lord Hugh Seymour's Naval Chaplain.

## The Prince's Proposal

member of the Church of England, as well as in the purity of her morals; and they cannot, he apprehends, desire a surer pledge, for the security of either of those most important objects.

"But His Royal Highness far from condemning the anxiety her friends have shewn on the score of her religion, thinks himself bound to give them every satisfaction on that point they can desire. He wishes (as does Mrs Fitzherbert most earnestly) that the freest intercourse should be kept up between the Child and her family and relations; and that they also should, if they please, be eye-witnesses of the course of her education as well as the formation of her mind and manners.

"This intercourse has never been prevented by Mrs Fitzherbert, and could never have been interrupted, had not the present contest taken place.

"For the material satisfaction of the minds of her relations and his own, the Prince proposes that He himself, Lord Thurlow and the Bishop of Winchester should be appointed, jointly with the Marquis of Hertford and Lord Robert Seymour, Guardians of this Infant under a previous understanding and declaration in writing, that she shall remain with Mrs Fitzherbert; unless anything shall arise, with reference to her religion, which in the judgment of the Guardians shall render it proper to remove her.

"If this arrangement shall be approved, the contest will be put an end to, and the infant will be bred up in harmony with her family, and with every protection to her spiritual and temporal welfare they can reasonably desire, but if notwithstanding the irresistible body of the evidence now disclosed to them, of the dreadful consequences which would inevitably ensue, they still determine to persevere in demanding the removal of the Child from under Mrs Fitzherbert's care, he shall feel himself bound no less by the obligation of common humanity than that of the parental duty he has undertaken, to resist their efforts to the utmost of his power.

## Mrs Fitzherbert

"Note. It will be necessary to provide for the filling up such vacancies as may occur in the number of the Guardians."<sup>1</sup>

### LORD EUSTON TO THE PRINCE OF WALES

"Your Royal Highness Has done me much honour in communicating your intentions with regard to Lord Hugh's youngest daughter through such a channel as that Your Royal Highness's candour will scarcely expect an answer from me singly upon a point of much delicacy and one on which no concurrence of opinion on the part of my fellow Executor and guardian Lord Henry Seymour [exists].

"Being placed in a situation of much responsibility and, as it has happened, of more than usual delicacy, it will be a source of unfeigned satisfaction to us both I am sure that the course it may be judged proper for us to take should accord with Your Royal Highness' wishes; that the decision we may come to will be dictated by an attachment to the memory and principles of the Person for whom we are acting I trust Your Royal Highness will not doubt, any more than the respect which it is our duty to have towards Your Royal Highness and to which our inclination also leads us."<sup>2</sup>

### THE PRINCE OF WALES TO LORD EUSTON

Brighton (October 15, 1802)

"My Friend Admiral Payne in company with the Revd Mr Ward will have the honor of presenting this letter to you. I do not mean to enter into the particulars concerning which they are fully authorized by me to converse most openly with you, as it would be entering upon too wide a field, and trespassing too long upon your patience. As the Revd Mr Ward was so strongly recommended by you, my dear Lord, to me in your last Kind Letter, I thought I could not select in consequence of what you know of him, so proper a person to accompany Admiral Payne upon the present occasion so interesting to my feelings, and

<sup>1</sup> *Ragley Papers.*

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

## Investment for Minney

so beneficial to the welfare of the dear Child of my much loved Friend Lord Hugh.”<sup>1</sup>

### THE PRINCE OF WALES’ FIRST PROPOSAL

“His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales has desired me to report to your Lordship the following Proposal: His Royal Highness on his part is disposed to execute an immediate deed of Trust, by which he entitles the youngest daughter of Lord Hugh Seymour to claim from him £10,000 on coming of age, or at the period of Marriage, or in case of his own death at the instant; that at the same time the present fortune to which the young lady is entitled shall be placed out at interest to accumulate till she comes of age: that on the other part His Royal Highness only stipulates for one condition, that the young lady shall remain in the hands, in which she is at present placed, not meaning by such an arrangement to bar an access to her brothers and sisters, Guardians and Friends or to preclude their concern in her education but desiring in both these respects, that their utmost wishes and suggestions should be followed up and that the line of instruction, whether religious, moral or literary should be precisely what they themselves recommend.

“His Royal Highness in addition to the advantage stated above, desires it may not be understood that he there bounds his disposition to befriend the Child, in case the proposed arrangement be acceded to, but that to fulfil these he specifically binds himself at the present moment.

“Should the Guardians be induced to approve of the proposal made by His Royal Highness it is his wish to assure them in the first place as Trustees of the Deed, and to add to them the names of the Marquis of Hertford and Admiral Payne.”<sup>2</sup>

### LORD EUSTON TO ADMIRAL PAYNE

“I lost no time in forwarding to Lord Henry Seymour joint Executor with myself and Guardian of the

<sup>1</sup> *Ragley Papers.*

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*



## Mrs Fitzherbert

late Lord Hugh Seymour's Children His Royal Highness' proposal of settling £10,000 upon the youngest daughter of Lord Hugh Seymour on certain conditions: the Kindness of which intention both as it relates to the memory of our friend Lord Hugh and to the worldly advantage of the Child is so striking that it renders it a subject of unspeakable regret to Lord Henry and to myself to feel that we should not be doing our Duty in the situation in which we are placed by Lord Hugh's Will if we were not to avail ourselves of the offer made by two of the nearest relations both of the Father and the Mother to take the female Children into their own families which precludes the possibility of acceding to a proposal made by His Royal Highness in a spirit of affectionate tenderness of which we beg also through you to convey our humble but most sincere admiration. As Guardians to the Children of our deceased friend we feel bound to act for them according to the dictates of our Consciences, a principle which we are sure His Royal Highness cannot disapprove even though in this instance the observance of it has led us to decline His Royal Highness' most liberal offer."

### SECOND PROPOSAL

"The Prince of Wales makes the following Proposal to the Guardians of the children of Lord Hugh Seymour. His Royal Highness is disposed to execute an immediate deed of Trust empowering the youngest daughter to claim from him or his Executors the sum of £10,000 on her coming of age or at the day of her marriage, or at the moment of his own death. His Royal Highness proposes that the proportion of her Father's fortune, to which she may be entitled, shall be placed out at Interest to accumulate till she comes of age. His Royal Highness on the other part stipulates for only one condition, that the young lady shall continue in the hands in which she is at present placed: not intending by this arrangement to bar the access to her family, friends and guardians, not to

## Letter to Lord Euston

exclude them from a concern in her education: but desiring in both those respects to fall in with their wishes, and that the line of instruction, religious, moral or literary shall be precisely marked out by their suggestion and recommendation.

"Nor does His Royal Highness wish to be understood, that his disposition to promote the interests of the Child is to be bounded by the arrangement specified above, but is willing to bind himself at the present moment and at all events to give effect to those Propositions which are therein mentioned.

"Should the Guardians be induced to accede to the Proposal in question, His Royal Highness proposes to appoint as Trustees of the Deed in the first place themselves, and to add to their names those of the Marquis of Hertford and Admiral Payne."<sup>1</sup>

### THE PRINCE OF WALES TO LORD EUSTON

Brighton (November 12, 1802)

"Admiral Payne's hand being disabled by the gout, I hasten to acknowledge myself, the receipt of your Lordship's Letter.

"Your Lordship enters perfectly into the grounds of my anxiety for the welfare of the Child. Regard to the memory of my Friend her Father prompted my tenderness to her. A promise exacted by her dying Mother, made the bond more sacred. Both expressed themselves happy in the affectionate care she was then under, and her engaging manners made the Task delightful. Your Lordship may judge then, if she *must* be removed, how much my anxious wishes and views for a Child thus circumstanced would be disappointed, if I were not fully persuaded that the affection of nearer Relations will more than compensate the Purposes I had formed for her Education and advancement. The motives of my attachment to her however heartfelt and sacred, give me no Title to interfere with her legal Guardians. I forbear therefore to ask a single Question which that attachment

<sup>1</sup> *Ragley Papers.*

## Mrs Fitzherbert

might otherwise have prompted. It is impossible to differ from your Lordship in this; that the dictates of Conscience must prescribe the duties of every relation in life and that to provide for the welfare and advancement of a Ward, is the whole duty of a Guardian.

“Your Lordship knows the Intentions I had conceived in her Favour; her Fortune would have been more suitable to her Birth than the present Pittance and her education would have been suitable to both. If Your Lordship sees reason to deprive your Ward of these advantages, that Reason will doubtless afford her a satisfactory account of the Matter when she comes to an Age fit to judge of it.”<sup>1</sup>

This letter Lord Euston received in answer to one he wrote to Admiral Payne and promptly forwarded a copy to Lord Hertford. The Guardians then decided that Minney should be removed from the pleasant influences and affections of Mrs Fitzherbert and the generous intentions of the Prince.

<sup>1</sup> *Ragley Papers.*

## CHAPTER VII

"During the years 1803-1806 Mrs Fitzherbert found herself involved in a protracted lawsuit concerning the custody of a little girl, Mary Seymour"—W. H. WILKINS.

A rosebud set with little wilful thorns  
And sweet as English air could make her

TENNYSON (*The Princess*).

As the Seymours were not amenable either to Mrs Fitzherbert's tears or to the Prince's bribes, there remained the Law. Lord Euston and Lord Henry claimed to be "legal" Guardians, and there was no ground on which to meet them save a legal battle.

The Prince flung himself into the strife with all his powers of emotion and exaggeration. He was a good hater and no one will deny he was not a good lover. He was never tepid in his relations to others. He adored and he magnified, but also he raged and he sformed. On the one hand all his geese were not only swans, but swans of peculiar enchantment. His mildest critics or opponents were vultures. He fixed his eccentric devotion on Minney. He had already swooped on her dying mother and her sister, Lady Euston, who forwarded her memory of the interview to the Attorney-General though three years had passed since the event (December 13, 1804):

"He talked of his own daughter, of little Mary, of Lord Hugh, chiefly addressing his conversation to me, and almost without waiting for an answer. Lady Horatia did not speak to him at all, and as she sat with her head turned towards me, she once or twice in a low voice expressed a degree of vexation at his volubility—and she grew more and more faint and I, thinking to put an end to the visit, moved two or

## Mrs Fitzherbert

three times to take my leave but she detained me. At last she whispered me: I believe you had better go for I see I shall never get rid of him whilst you stay. I then left them and before I got home I saw him pass in his Curricule so I knew he could not have stayed long after I was gone. In the evening when I saw her, she said: that she was not sorry that she had seen him, for that after I was gone he had mentioned Lord Hugh and all her children in a very affectionate manner, which she knew would please Hugh as he was certainly more attached to the Prince than he now liked to acknowledge and that his protection might certainly be some time or other of use to her sons. She afterwards once or twice mentioned her visit and she asked me smiling whether it did not put me in mind of former times when he used to go off upon some favourite subject till he talked himself into believing that all he said was true. She added: now his rage is to say that poor Minney is his governess and I suppose he expects us to believe him. . . .”

In the same month Lady Bessborough gives us a glimpse of how Mrs Fitzherbert, during the change of Ministers (Xmas Day, 1804), “met Tierney” toiling up Greenwich Hill posting to Town in a great fuss at not having been sent to. He stopped her to inquire the last news. She answered: The Doctor<sup>3</sup> has been with Mr Pitt these three hours. You had better take up my horses to make more haste, as everything will be gone before you get there.”

In August, 1804, Mrs Calvert visited Brighton, attended the Pavilion several times, and sketched the reconciled couple, not without scribbling as one Beauty of another:

“Mrs Fitzherbert lives in a house communicating with the Pavilion till one she is building is finished. She lives entirely with the Prince and in a manner does

<sup>1</sup> *Ragley Papers.*

<sup>2</sup> The statesman who fought a duel with Pitt.

<sup>3</sup> Addington, the Prime Minister succeeding Pitt.

## More About Minney

the honours of his house. His attachment and attention to her is unbounded and surprising. She is now, I believe, about fifty, very fat but with a charming countenance, her features are beautiful, except her mouth which is ugly, having a set of not good false teeth, but her person is too fat, and she makes a great display of a very white but not prettily formed bosom, which I often long to throw a handkerchief over. Her manners are good-humored (though I think I can at times discern a look of ill-temper glide across her countenance) unaffected and pleasing but very absent and I often have thought she was not happy, for she heaves such deep sighs sometimes in one of those fits of absence that I have actually started. There does not seem to me to be any brilliancy about Mrs Fitzherbert, no agreeable talents, or powers of captivation, but captivation there must be about her, though I dont perceive it, as she has captivated His Royal Highness for so many years.

"She has a sweet little girl who lives with her: the orphan daughter of Lord Hugh and Lady Horatia Seymour. She is about five years old. Lord Hugh's family and also Lady Horatia's have objected to her living with Mrs Fitzherbert for many reasons. They very naturally consider the Prince's mistress (for what else can one call her, he having a wife?) not the most respectable protectress—besides she is a Roman Catholic. But she has carried her point and keeps her, promising faithfully to educate her in the Protestant religion and I understand she has a clergyman of that persuasion to come to her three or four times a week. The Prince and Mrs Fitzherbert are passionately fond of this little creature, whom they always call Minny. She calls Mrs Fitzherbert 'Mama' and the Prince 'Prinny' and I hear at the time that her family wanted to get her from Mrs Fitzherbert, she often clung with her little arms round the Prince, saying: Prinny, wont you fight for me? You wont let them take me from you. The Prince, I hear, has engaged to give her ten thousand pounds."

## Mrs Fitzherbert

While the Seymours were struggling to remove Minney from Mrs Fitzherbert, the King and Queen were struggling against the Prince for possession of Princess Charlotte. The Dowager Lady de Clifford was appointed governess to the Princess. "She is Mrs Fitzherbert's bosom friend, which I think makes the choice a very improper one, and is devoted also to the card table." (Mrs Calvert.) There was also a Miss Jeffreys, "toady to Mrs Fitzherbert and her bosom friend, so thinks herself in consequence a very great personage" but "a nasty cross thing Miss Jeffreys is." Miss Lucia Jeffreys had the honour of being mentioned in Mrs Fitzherbert's Will, but only survived her by a few weeks in 1837.

The Prince meantime consulted Lord Thurlow, who had been Lord Chancellor, and employed Sir Samuel Romilly to undertake the Seymour Case. Like so many of Mrs Fitzherbert's private affairs her simple desire to adopt a child became public property, public discussion, and, finally, a fine public row.

Mrs Fitzherbert had a case, as it was found that the Will appointing Lord Euston and Lord Henry Guardians had been made before Minney was born. Minney was made Appellant against the so-called Guardians, and Mr William Bentinck brought a case as "next friend of the Appellant." Mr Spencer Perceval, later Prime Minister, appeared for the Guardians. The defence was that they objected not to Mrs Fitzherbert's morals, but to her Religion. "Mrs Fitzherbert merited everything that could be said in her praise; but whatever amiable qualities she might possess, the Religion she professed excluded her from the right to retain the custody of a Protestant child."

Romilly replied that her Religion would remain uninfluenced by Mrs Fitzherbert and he added the extraordinary plea that she "would derive peculiar

## Lord Eldon Decides

advantage from the patronage and the protection of the Prince."

It must have seemed very odd, but Mrs Fitzherbert's affairs always had some peculiarity. As long as she was commonly regarded as the mistress of the Prince, it must have seemed odd to call attention to the advantages of living under the protection of her lover.

In vain the Prince and Mrs Fitzherbert made affidavits. In vain the Bishop of Winchester testified to Miss Seymour's mastery of the Catechism. In vain the physicians called attention to the dangers likely to befall her health if she were moved.

Mrs Fitzherbert insisted that Lady Horatia had said to her: "Don't think I could be so unfeeling as to take her from you." And further she had used words to this effect: "Pray keep it and do with it as you please and as you have done as I consider it is more your child than my own."

The Prince said that as a dying woman Lady Horatia had made him swear to be always father and protector of this child. His solemn engagement had enabled Lady Horatia to die happily soon afterwards.

It was impossible to say how far the Prince's fervent imagination had coloured this pathetic scene. Lady Euston certainly contradicted the sense he gave of his interview.

The Master in Chancery made his decision in favour of the Guardians. Mrs Fitzherbert appealed to a higher Court, but once again the case was given against her, this time by Lord Chancellor Eldon. The Prince then brought a final appeal to the House of Lords whom he hoped to find more manageable than the Judges. To make things certain, the Prince canvassed the Peers freely and successfully. The Royal Dukes, except Gloucester, who was a half-brother of Lady Horatia, supported the Prince, and only twelve Peers opposed. By a happy accident Lord Erskine, who had



## Mrs Fitzherbert

been Counsel for Minney during the hearing before Lord Eldon, had become Lord Chancellor with the change of Ministers.

There was no actual division in the House, for as soon as Lord Hertford, as head of the family of Seymour, offered to take the guardianship upon himself, the Committee immediately agreed to the proposal. He demanded to be unfettered in his action and he authorised Minney to continue residence with Mrs Fitzherbert.

Mrs Fitzherbert had secured the help of Lord Hertford through her friendship with Lady Hertford, who, however, demanded a singular fee, nothing less than the future devotion of the Prince. Mrs Fitzherbert had gained a child, but lost a husband.

According to the Editors of the *Romilly Papers* :

“ This decision was attended with consequences of considerable importance. It occasioned a great intimacy between the Prince and Lady Hertford which ended with her entirely supplanting Mrs Fitzherbert in the Prince’s favour; and it produced that hostility towards the Catholics, which the Prince manifested when he became Regent, and his determination to place his confidence in those Tory Ministers, whom he had always before considered as his personal enemies.”

In his *Memoirs* Sir Samuel Romilly recorded how he appeared for Miss Seymour in the trial :

“ While the cause was depending, the Prince of Wales was extremely anxious about the event of it. He loved the child with paternal affection and the idea of having her torn from him, seemed to be as painful to him as it was to Mrs Fitzherbert. It was upon the occasion of this cause that he desired once that I, who was one of the counsel for Mrs Fitzherbert, would meet him at her house. I met him accordingly and had a very long conversation with His Royal Highness.”

## The Trial in the Lords

And describing the final day of the trial in the Lords (June 14, 1806):

"I replied in the House of Lords in the appeal respecting the guardianship of Miss Seymour. The order of the Lord Chancellor was reversed; and Lord and Lady Hertford were by the House appointed the guardians. Several peers voted against this but there was no division. I counted between eighty and ninety peers who were present. The Prince, who was as anxious that Mrs Fitzherbert should continue to have the care of the child as he could have been if the child had been his own and who knew that Lord and Lady Hertford would not remove her, had earnestly entreated all his friends to attend. I had, on the Prince's account, done everything that depended on me to prevent this; and which was only to represent to Colonel MacMahon what I thought of such a proceeding. The question was certainly one which involved no legal consideration whatever and which every peer was as competent to decide as a lawyer could be, but yet to canvass votes for a judicial decision is that which cannot be too strongly reprobated."

The Prince canvassed the Duke of Norfolk in these terms (June 3, 1806): "I have seen Lord Hertford, who will call upon you in the course of the day, or, at any rate, before the business is brought before the Committee." This, according to Mr Philip Howard of Corby, "evinces the active interest taken by the Prince at that period in a question which Mrs Fitzherbert had much at heart."

After three years of legal anxiety and domestic agitation Mrs Fitzherbert's little home was left as it was. The final decision was made on June 14, 1806, and two days later the Duke of Kent wrote to congratulate her:

"Accept then the assurance of my best wishes on this, as well as on every occasion in which your happi-

## Mrs Fitzherbert

ness is concerned and believe me it is no small gratification to me to reflect that I have had the opportunity of proving by my conduct that in saying this I am far from meaning empty professions. Pray give my love to your *little Angel*.<sup>1</sup>

It is impossible not to enjoy the discomfiture of Lady Waldegrave, who, as Mrs Fitzherbert wrote to Mrs Browne, a daughter of Lord Thurlow (June 17, 1806):

"Came to town on purpose, wrote to all the Press to support her, turned out the people she had let her house to in Berkeley Square and fixed herself in it, telling everybody my poor Child was to go to reside with her on Saturday evening. What a horrid creature she is! Thank God she has been disappointed."

The Prince and Mrs Fitzherbert had always been great friends of Lord Thurlow to whose illegitimate daughter this and the following letter were directed (December 22, 1802):

"By a letter the Prince received yesterday from Mr Tyrwitt we were all made most extremely unhappy at the account he gave of Lord Thurlow's illness. Nobody can feel more anxious about him than the Prince and myself and I do intreat of you, my dear Mrs Browne, to give me a line to let me know how he does. I know your time is much taken up. Therefore only wish one single line to tranquillize the anxiety we are under on his account. I will not trespass more than imploring you to take care of yourself and to believe me always truly and affectionately yours."

Thanks then to the Prince, to two Lord Chancellors, to the Royal Dukes, and to the Hertfords Mrs Fitzherbert was allowed to retain her ward. Edward Jerningham wrote to Lady Bedingfeld (June 18, 1806):

"This Trial [of Lord Melville] is already giving place to the Trial of Mrs Fitzherbert relative to the

<sup>1</sup> *Fitzherbert Papers*, III.

## George Seymour

little girl. I am perfectly glad the Lords have checked the literal application of the Law to this cause. It would have been the actual death of the child. She is so fervently and exclusively devoted to Mrs Fitzherbert. And Mrs Fitzherbert having manifested her unequivocal intention of rearing her little orphan in the Established Doctrine, it would have been a cruel persecution for the Lords to have acted otherwise.”<sup>1</sup>

Minney Seymour had a brother, George, who later wrote a book of *Confidential Memoranda from 1818-1837*. Later he became Mrs Fitzherbert’s executor so that he enjoyed the confidence of both sides in the Seymour Case. The following is his summary :

“The Prince behaved with consistent kindness to my sister Mary now Mrs Dawson Damer when Mrs Fitzherbert in 1803 endeavoured to establish that my Parents had intended that my sister should remain under her care. The Prince spared no effort to induce her proper Guardians the Duke of Grafton (then Lord Euston) and Lord Henry Seymour to allow her to remain with Mrs Fitzherbert, which they had refused from thinking my parents had entertained no such intention and that that Lady’s religion as a Roman Catholic as well as other circumstances made her ineligible for the charge. The Prince in addition to other arguments at that time sent to them to say he was about to execute a Deed assuring her ten thousand pounds when she came of age if she was not removed from Mrs Fitzherbert.

“Lord Euston and Lord Henry declined receiving this on the grounds they had already stated for wishing she should be brought up with her own family, adding an expression of respectful gratitude to the Prince for his intended generosity to their ward, but that their duty prevented their accepting the gift with the condition announced, and that they considered it less necessary as under the decision which had been made about my father’s property she would be as well off

<sup>1</sup> *Jerningham Letters.*

## Mrs Fitzherbert

as was usual for ladies of her Birth. The suit to determine Mary's guardianship consequently went on in the Court of Chancery and House of Lords terminating in the latter assigning the guardianship to my uncle Lord Hertford who left my sister with Mrs Fitzherbert, who treated her with the zeal and tenderness of a Mother and endeavoured to obviate any difficulties which had been made about the difference of Religion by inducing the Rev Mr Croft and occasionally the Bishop of London to superintend my sister's religious instruction as a Protestant.

"Early in her childhood Mrs Fitzherbert discontinued her association with the Prince and in consequence my sister saw H.R.H. very rarely and only when she happened to be in society at which the Prince was present or at Court Balls after she was introduced: but He always sent her a little present on her birthday and on that when she attained her 21st year the Prince paid to Trustees for her then 10,000£ he had offered in 1803 with the subsequent interest which nearly doubled the original sum amounting with the Principal to between 19 and 20,000£.

"She married after H.R.H. came to the Throne and he sent for Mr Forster the solicitor who was making her Marriage settlements and directed some changes which he thought would secure her interests."<sup>1</sup>

Lady Euston wrote to George Seymour (January 19, 1805):

"We are still in suspense about Little Mary though I hope that it will be decided in a few days. It is impossible to express all the anxiety that it has caused me, as everything has been tried that could possibly be thought of to defeat our object. I have never had any doubt of our success, but the being obliged to act with such an appearance of harshness towards Mrs Fitzherbert is extremely painful to my feelings. At the same time I am supported by the consciousness that I am acting in the manner which would most

<sup>1</sup> *Ragley Papers.*

## Sad Society

please your dear Father and Mother if they could witness all that is passing, and though I may and must feel for Mrs Fitzherbert I must not allow such feeling to interfere with my duty to any one of the children of the two people I ever had the most reason to love in this world. As soon as it is decided I hope I shall be able to send you immediate intelligence of the event."<sup>1</sup>

George Seymour was worrying at sea over the fate of his little sister when he was overwhelmed by the death of his Admiral, Lord Nelson, who had promised him promotion. Lady Euston wrote (November 17, 1805):

"I look to the time when the World will acknowledge the justice of the promise which Lord Nelson has made for you. To have been distinguished by him at your age must be a most gratifying remembrance to you and never can be forgot and I trust that Lord Nelson even in his Grave will still serve his Country. . . . I am much pleased with what you say about your poor little Sister Mary. I trust that the decision of the House of Lords will be favorable and obtained soon after the opening of the Sessions. I should be sorry to have you implicated at all in the business, but I am most sincerely gratified by your anxious wish to rescue this poor little girl from the sad society she has fallen into."<sup>2</sup>

It was clear that the religious question meant little compared to the social disgrace sensed by the Seymours. For a little girl to live with Mrs Fitzherbert seemed the same as being apprenticed to a Madam of ill-fame. Such was the secret comment bound to be excited by a lady who could not or rather would not produce her marriage lines!

Lady Euston continued to George Seymour (May 9, 1806):

"Lord Romney (a very respectable and worthy old

<sup>1</sup> *Mrs Lock's Papers.*

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

## Mrs Fitzherbert

man) has undertaken to present Lord Henry's and Lord Euston's Petition, which I am extremely glad of, as he is a man so thoroughly acquainted with the Rules of the House of Lords, that he will say no more or less than is absolutely necessary upon the subject, and will not be disturbed by Lord Erskine's petulance. I expect him to resist the Petition to the utmost of his power and perhaps will prevent its being granted but Lord Henry or Lord Euston will have the satisfaction of knowing that the impediment originates in their adversaries, who must be conscious of the badness of their Cause, and have no hope but in delay. I find that Mrs Fitzherbert's friends now complain of Lord Henry's and Lord Euston's cruelty in having left the Child with her for this last year unless they intended to give up the Cause. If they had taken the poor little Soul last year we should of course have heard of their cruelty in so doing, therefore such declarations must not be attended to, as an attempt to satisfy the World must ever be a dangerous attempt and seldom if ever succeeds. The only line to follow with *certainly* of reward, is never to lose sight of one's duty; and by keeping a steady and firm course without stopping to enquire who is pleased or displeased, we are certain of the satisfaction arising from an approving conscience, which cannot be blighted by the Frowns and Sneers of Royalty or Power."

Lady Euston wrote after the Trial (June 15, 1806):

"After having indulged the House of Lords with four days pleading upon the subject of your poor little Sister, Lord Hertford yesterday proposed himself as her guardian and was accepted as such by the House of Lords so that decides the contest. In respect to his Rank, his situation in life and his relationship to dear little Mary everybody must agree that he is perfectly unexceptionable and if he had offered himself as Guardian to you all when this question was first agitated, the World would have approved his conduct . . . nobody ventured in the House of Lords to propose

## Lord Hertford's Action

Mrs Fitzherbert as Guardian to the Child and Lord Hertford's offering himself precluded any unpleasant discussion which might have arisen had anybody else proposed him. What Lord Hertford's plans are we of course do not know. . . .

" Since I wrote the above I have been told that the Bishop of St Asaph did propose Mrs Fitzherbert as Guardian! but as he likewise is said to have talked of spirits coming from *the shades of Pluto*, we are certainly at liberty to doubt, not only, whether he is a Protestant Bishop, but also whether he is a Christian. I lament over your poor little Sister's fate, whose early instructions are guided to teach her to dislike all those most devoted to your dear Father and Mother."<sup>1</sup>

Lord Hertford's action in awarding Minney Seymour to Mrs Fitzherbert filled the Seymour family with indignation and consternation. Lady Euston wrote (July 1, 1806) :

" The prospect for your poor little Sister's moral and religious education is a melancholy one, and I am sorry to say from all I hear that the great object of those she now lives with is to fill her mind with ideas of her superiority over her Sister, but I am happy to say that dear Racey's good sense is superior to her Age and she sees the folly of such conduct and only pities her Sister for having such nonsense put into her head. It may be perhaps considered as a melancholy truth that the Prince is so often governed entirely by Caprice, that having gained his Point, the poor little girl will not be for any length of time an object to him and she may then stand a better chance of being more properly educated; for Mrs Fitzherbert must feel that she will be answerable to us all for any misconduct of your poor little Sister and has in fact (to indulge her own inclinations) run the risque of being called to a very severe account if this child fails in any moral or religious duty.

<sup>1</sup> *Mrs Lock's Papers.*



## Mrs Fitzherbert

"Let us hope the best and trust that this poor girl may still be restored to us. Nothing can justify Lord Hertford's conduct, for as he never possessed your Father's confidence, he could not know what his wishes or intentions were; but the whole proceeding was carried on in a very artful manner for great stress was laid on Patty's evidence, which ought not to have been admitted at all; and on the last day (when no answer could be made to it) Sir Samuel Romilly mentioned Philips as an ignorant servant of little feeling; when Mrs Fitzherbert knows that your dear Mother was very much displeased with Patty; and that your Father had great confidence in Philips. I mention this to show how even the most trifling circumstances were seized upon and turned to their own account, knowing that there was nobody in the House of Lords sufficiently acquainted with the circumstances to contradict them."

(March 1, 1807)

"I have heard very little about your poor little Sister Mary, for those who used to tease me most upon the subject appear now to have forgot that such a being exists. I was told that she now has a French Governess, who is a Roman Catholic, but I cannot help thinking that that cannot be true, for even Lord Hertford with all his apathy and indifference must feel that such a departure from all their professions must strike those who are still interested about the poor little girl."

(April 10, 1807)

"Racey has seen poor little Mary two or three times, but they are not comfortable together, for I suppose in order that it may be repeated to us, there is such a display of education that when Racey visits Mary nothing else is thought of, but to show how much she has learned, is learning or is to learn, that Racey can only laugh at the parade."

## A Gillray Caricature

The effect of Mrs Fitzherbert's influence was at least accepted as austere. Lady Euston wrote (June, 1807):

"I heard a great deal about poor little Mary last night and was told that she is not at all like a child, very formal, very civil and none of the vivacity belonging to her age. Really from the situation she is in, I cannot help feeling that it is perhaps as well for her that she is brought up in that manner for I hope it proves that she is no longer a mere plaything and I think she had better be formal than a Romp."<sup>1</sup>

During the Seymour Case Gillray issued a caricature of Mrs Fitzherbert lifting Minney Seymour in her arms towards a Catholic Heaven. The girlish figure has often been identified with the Princess Charlotte, but the date and the circumstances of the case make the identification with Minney Seymour certain.

Mrs W. L. George has kindly supplied a description of the print from a forthcoming volume of her *Catalogue of Caricatures* in the British Museum:

### THE GUARDIAN ANGEL

(Pubd April 22, 1805 by H. Humfrey St James St)

Aquatint (coloured impression) A travesty of Peter's An Angel carrying the Spirit of a Child to Paradise exhibited R.A. 1783, in which the Angel is a portrait of Mary Isabella Duchess of Rutland. Gillray has followed the original pose of the two figures. Mrs Fitzherbert as the Angel flies upward, her arm caressingly round Minney Seymour, her left hand points upwards to a burlesqued altar, irradiated and surrounded by cherubs heads which recede in aerial perspective. They are Windham and above him Grenville, Grey, Grattan and unrecognisable Lord Holland (left). On the right are Sheridan, Norfolk, Fox, Burdett and, a pendant to Lord Holland, Derby. The Angel ascends from the Pavilion which is partly obscured by heavy clouds. After the title "the hint

<sup>1</sup> *Mrs Lock's Papers.*

## Mrs Fitzherbert

taken from the Rev Mr Peters Sublime idea of an Angel conducting the Soul of a Child to Heaven."

In an imitation with the same title, published May 10, 1805, the Pavilion is replaced by Carlton House, and above the altar, in place of the Virgin, is the Prince of Wales.

## CHAPTER VIII

"I shall be able to tell you that the Prince of Wales walked on the Steyne such a day; that Mrs Fitzherbert was in low spirits such another, that there was an Assembly at the Pavilion t'other night."  
—SARAH LADY LYTTLETON.

HENCEFORTH Minney and Mrs Fitzherbert were inseparables. Minney's birthday on November 23 was never forgotten by the Prince even in later days when he had forgotten Mrs Fitzherbert. Minney appeared at the grand occasions when the Prince celebrated his on successive Twelfths of August. What splendours were witnessed then on the Downs and in the Pavilion! Minney's name began to slip into the records of Brighton;

(August 12, 1805)

"Soon after six His Royal Highness in his carriage left the Pavilion to dine with the Marchioness of Downshire at Westfield Lodge. Among the *elegantes* present on this occasion were Lord and Lady Harrington, Lady Ann Maria Stanhope, Mrs Fitzherbert, Colonel Hanger, Colonel Leigh. The dinner was of the most brilliant and inviting description. About nine o'clock the Prince, the Marchioness and the whole of her guests removed to the Pavilion where a most splendid entertainment, consisting of a Ball and a Supper, was given by the Prince. . . . Mr Sheridan, who arrived here the day before, was of the Royal Party. On the night following it being the natal day of the little interesting *protégée* of Mrs Fitzherbert, Miss Seymour, this young lady gave a Ball and supper to a party of juvenile nobility at the Pavilion."

(August 12, 1806)

"This being the natal day of the heir apparent, the morning was ushered in by the ringing of bells and the

## Mrs Fitzherbert

flag was hoisted on the tower of the Church. Two oxen *pro bono publico* are roasting whole on the Level. At half past twelve the Prince of Wales, habited as a Field Marshal, a star at his breast, accompanied by his royal brothers and mounted on a grey charger, splendidly caparisoned, left the Pavilion for the Downs where the following Regiments were drawn up in line. . . . The Royal Brothers were all in regimentals with stars at their breasts. The Duke of Sussex wore his Highland uniform. . . . Lady Haggerston and Miss Seymour, the Lord Chancellor, Lord Headfort, Mr Sheridan and Mr Smythe were in the Prince's landau. Mrs Fitzherbert was detained at home by indisposition."

Minney's birthday was celebrated royally (November 23, 1807):

"The Prince arrived here in order we understand to celebrate the birthday of the Hon Miss Seymour the interesting protégée of Mrs Fitzherbert."<sup>1</sup>

And the following year (November 23, 1808):

"In the evening a grand Ball in celebration of the Hon Miss Seymour was given to a number of the young nobility and gentry at the Pavilion. The Prince honoured the ball-room with his presence."<sup>2</sup>

A sorrowful change was taking place in Mrs Fitzherbert's life, as strange and complicated as any that could befall a woman. Lady Hertford, having obtained a platonic domination over the Prince, insisted on Mrs Fitzherbert acting in the manner of a public chaperon to herself.

Lord Stourton described this phase as follows:

"This long negotiation (the Seymour Case) in which the Prince was the principal instrument, led him at last to those confidential relations, which ultimately gave to Lady Hertford an ascendancy over

<sup>1</sup> *Sussex Weekly Advertiser*.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

## Lady Hertford's Influence

him superior to that possessed by Mrs Fitzherbert herself, and from a friend converted her into a successful rival. Lady Hertford, anxious for the preservation of her own reputation, which she was not willing to compromise with the public even when she ruled the Prince with the most absolute sway, exposed Mrs Fitzherbert at this time to very severe trials, which at last almost, as she said, ruined her health and destroyed her nerves. Attentions were required from her towards Lady Hertford herself, even when most aware of her superior influence over the Prince, and these attentions were extorted by the menace of taking away her child. To diminish her apparent influence in public as well as private was now the object. When at Brighton, the Prince, who had passed part of his mornings with Mrs Fitzherbert on friendly terms at her own house, did not even notice her in the slightest manner at the Pavilion on the same evenings, and she afterwards understood that such attentions would have been reported to her rival.

"She was frequently on the point of that separation which afterwards took place, but was prevented by the influence of the Royal Family from carrying her resolution into effect. Upon one occasion, after the death of Queen Caroline, upon the Prince informing her that he was determined to marry again, she only replied: Very well, Sir; but upon his leaving her, she ordered horses with a resolution to abandon the country, and was only prevented from doing so, that day, by the interposition of a common friend, the same,<sup>1</sup> I believe, if my memory does not fail me, who was afterwards the bearer of the last tribute of her affection and conjugal duty to the King."<sup>2</sup>

Lady Euston wrote to Sir George Seymour after 1807:

"I know not what Mrs Fitzherbert does in all these confusions and reconciliations as the World says it is

<sup>1</sup> The good physician, Sir Henry Hallford.

<sup>2</sup> *Lord Stourton's Narrative.*

## Mrs Fitzherbert

all owing to Lady Hertford's influence that the Prince is put in a way to become a good Boy. . . . Mrs Fitzherbert looks remarkably well but she appears in public in an odd situation, having few people to converse with, and the Prince often not speaking to her at all and at other times she appears indignant with him when he does."<sup>1</sup>

Minney was now installed for good in Tilney Street, and among the company of her friends was George Keppel, later Earl of Albemarle, who recorded in his *Memories* how:

"By my little hostess I had the honor of being presented to the Prince afterwards George the Fourth. No sooner was His Royal Highness seated in his arm-chair than my young companion would jump up on one of his knees to which she seemed to claim a prescriptive right. Straitway would arise an animated talk between Prinney and Minney as they respectively called each other."<sup>2</sup>

Albemarle lived to be the last officer survivor of the Battle of Waterloo. In his ninetieth year he wrote to Lady Constance Leslie:

(Xmas day, 1888)

"Your letter called me back from the tenth to the first decade of my life. I almost fancied myself issuing from the nursery of 6, Tilney St for a walk in Hyde Park hand in hand with your beautiful mother, each of us carrying one penny to bestow upon our two respective old blind women who sat begging at the edge of what was then called the 'basin.' These were the days when I had the honor of being introduced by 'Minney' to her loving 'Prinney.'"

Exactly one month after the Seymour Case was decided, a Committee of Lords under Lord Chancellor Erskine concluded "the delicate investigation" into

<sup>1</sup> *Mrs Lock's Papers.*

<sup>2</sup> *Fifty Years of My Life: George Earl of Albemarle.*



MRS FITZHERBERT

From the portrait by John Hoppner.

By kind permission of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.





## Jefferys' Pamphlet

the conduct of the Princess of Wales (July 14, 1806). She was acquitted of graver charges, but her conduct was found very indecorous. In the previous year the Duke of Sussex had warned the Prince of her behaviour, and, as the succession was liable to be affected by her aberrations, the Prince had rightly taken action. The King himself felt unable to receive her. It is true that the Government of the moment ("all the Talents") included such friends of the Prince as Fox and Erskine, but in 1807 the friends of the Princess had taken their place and under Mr Perceval and Lord Eldon she was acquitted even of the "particulars of conduct" alleged against her.

During this year, what with the Seymour Case and the indiscretions of the Princess, Mrs Fitzherbert was at the mercy of the Pamphleteer and the Caricaturist. A wretched jeweller, ruined possibly by the patronage of the Prince, revenged himself in a celebrated pamphlet laying the troubles of the Princess at Mrs Fitzherbert's bedroom door.

Jeffreys' Pamphlet was the outrage of a madman inciting the Protestant feeling of the country against poor Mrs Fitzherbert, who was already suspected of trying to convert Minney Seymour and the Princess Charlotte to her own religion. His arrows grazed the truth when he guessed at the marriage, stating that "she a third time entered into the married state, according to the ceremonies of the Romish Church, with an Illustrious Personage of the Protestant Religion: for this reason the marriage was kept secret."

Edward Jerningham gave Jeffreys his deserts (June 18, 1806):

"The Pamphlet is a Libel and can make no impression but upon minds that are actuated by a malignant disposition. The facts are distorted and interspersed with falsehoods. The introducing Mrs Fitzherbert into this Pamphlet is illiberal. The Booksellers refuse

## Mrs Fitzherbert

admitting it into their shops. But curiosity and malevolence excited numbers to purchase the Trash. It will occasion a few hours talk and then drop into the vortex of oblivion.”<sup>1</sup>

It was curious how much was known for truth and even more suspected. In the *Diary Illustrative of the Times of George IV* Lord Bradford is described as one of the last living witnesses present at “the marriage ceremony of the Prince of Wales with Mrs Fitzherbert both in the Catholic and Episcopal form,” and at the same time the author, Lady Charlotte Bury, observes :

“He was the friend of Mrs Fitzherbert and if the Prince has changed towards him I do not think he would resent the change. I have often observed that the Prince and Princess of Wales have a strange sympathy in their loves and hatreds.”

It was pleasant that the Princess, however much she was incited or irritated, never turned against Mrs Fitzherbert. Her Lady-in-Waiting, Lady Charlotte Bury, recorded :

“The Princess of Wales speaks highly of Mrs Fitzherbert. She always says: that is the Prince’s true wife. She is an excellent woman. It is a great pity for him he ever broke with her. Do you know I know the man who was present at his marriage, the late Lord Bradford. He declared to a friend of mine that when he went to inform Mrs Fitzherbert that the Prince had married me, she would not believe it, for she knew she was herself married to him.”

The Lord Bradford was the Orlando Bridgeman who was not exactly present, but accompanied the Prince to Mrs Fitzherbert’s house on the momentous December 15 of 1785.

<sup>1</sup> *Jerningham Letters.*

## Alas, Poor Mrs Fitzherbert !

At Brighton Mrs Calvert was recording (June 5, 1807):

"My sister and I went late to an Assembly at Mrs Fitzherbert's where were all the fine world. The Prince of Wales, Duke of York, Dukes of Clarence, Cambridge and Kent were all there, dressed in full uniform."

This must have been the last of Mrs Fitzherbert's Assemblies, for the Prince by autumn had transferred his affections.

(July 25, 1807) "Last night we went to a ball at Lady Headfort's. The Prince was in high spirits and looks better. I think poor Mrs Fitzherbert much deserted by him now. He has taken it into his head to fall desperately in love with Lady Hertford . . . without exception the most forbidding, haughty, unpleasant-looking woman I ever saw."

When Mrs Calvert returned to Brighton all was finished between the Prince and Mrs Fitzherbert.

(August 5, 1807) "The Prince and Mrs Fitzherbert are expected here either today or tomorrow. It is reported that the King and Queen are to come to the Pavilion after the races. The Prince going to Cheltenham to be near his beloved Lady Hertford. Alas poor Mrs Fitzherbert!

"(August 8) Mr Calvert and I visited Mrs Fitzherbert. She seemed extremely glad to see us and took us all over her house, which is a very pretty one. I think the Prince looks dismally."

However, Minney was enjoying the tricks of a conjurer at the Pavilion and Mrs Fitzherbert was joined by her sister, Lady Haggerston.

(August 18) "Last night at half past ten Mr Calvert and I went to Mrs Fitzherbert's. I played two rubbers at Casino with Mr Ryecroft and Lady Haggerston. I

## Mrs Fitzherbert

think her remarkably pleasing and she really is beautiful. Mrs Fitzherbert has ordered a Play for Friday and she has begged I will go with her.

"(August 22) Last night I went to Mrs Fitzherbert's box at the Play. Miss Vanneck and Miss Jefferies were the only women but there were a good many men. . . . I have been sitting with Mrs Fitzherbert this morning. She is to come to my box on Tuesday and to bring Miss Seymour. Nothing can be more cordial than she is to me. She asked me to come whenever I can of an evening with her. She told me the Prince had given them a great fright since he went away, having been one day very ill, but he is now well again."

"(August 25) At Mrs Fitzherbert's last night, while I was out from cards, I read at least seven newspapers of the day. I said to Mrs Fitzherbert: What a number of papers you take in. She answered they were the Prince's, which he sends her."

At this period there can have been nobody more unpopular than Mrs Fitzherbert unless it were the Prince himself. The Earl of Carlisle sent him a long paper of warnings and advice (February 2, 1807):

"In case of the Princess's restoration and readmission into the Royal Family at Windsor, the Prince seems exposed to increased difficulties, even to more alarming embarrassments. One trembles to think what a sensation may be created at any hour by the mistaken zeal, or malicious effort, of any individual in either House of Parliament. There is no guessing to what height the storm may rise against those who, from supposed motives of their own, make use of influence with the Prince, and will be considered as opposers of the general wish, and enemies to the real interests of his Royal Highness.

"Though I do not only believe, but *know*, how innocent Mrs Fitzherbert is of all that may be imputed to her on that head, yet I solemnly declare I consider her situation as becoming more perilous. Measuring,

## The Papal Brief Destroyed

as I fancy I do, the feelings and dispositions of many of the lower classes of the people, I hardly have a doubt that, with half the mischievous ability of a Lord George Gordon, Mrs Fitzherbert might at any hour be liable to insult and danger not only in the streets, but also in her own house."<sup>1</sup>

At this time Mrs Fitzherbert destroyed the Papal Brief or document authorising her to live with the Prince *sicut uxor*. The Marriage Certificate was more than she felt able to destroy, but she scissored away the names of the two witnesses, Mr Errington and Jack Smythe, to save them from any penal consequences in case the document was stolen.

There can be no doubt that the Prince was affected by the Protestant feelings which never died down at the suspicion that there was a Popish wife somewhere. As the prospect of a Regency approached, he had wished to be less and less under such an influence. Besides, he had accepted the imperious domination of Lady Hertford, who was Protestant and Tory, and had made herself acceptable both in faith and morals with the public. Lady Hertford was not one to condescend to be a mistress. She was content that he should lie at her feet.

It must have been a relief to Mrs Fitzherbert to find so collapsible a lover slowly drifting from her. The final separation was at hand. For him it was only a question of time: for her only the opportunity of an excuse.

Minney remained the link between the former lovers, and the last present which the Prince made to Mrs Fitzherbert was a picture of Minney, drawn by William John Scott, at Brighton, in 1811.

For two years Mrs Fitzherbert suffered as much as woman could suffer from the presence of a haughty rival. When the Prince was in town, he could pay his

<sup>1</sup> *Hist. MSS. Comm. Papers of Earl of Carlisle.*

## Mrs Fitzherbert

daily visit to Lady Hertford in Manchester House, while Mrs Fitzherbert could hide herself in Tilney Street. But at Brighton the Prince required her presence at the Pavilion until even her humbled spirit could bear it no longer and she wrote to him (December 18, 1809):

"I trust your Royal Highness will permit me to explain the reasons why I could not possibly accept the honour of your invitation to the Pavilion for yesterday and for this evening. The very great incivilities I have received these two years just because I obeyed your orders in going there was too visible to everyone present and too poignantly felt by me to admit of my putting myself in a situation of again being treated with such indignity, for whatever may be thought of me by some individuals, it is well known Your Royal Highness four and twenty years ago placed me in a situation so nearly connected with your own that I have a claim upon you for protection. I feel I owe it to myself not to be insulted under your roof with impunity. The influence you are now under and the conduct of one of your servants, I am sorry to say, has the appearance of your sanction and support, and renders my situation in your house, situated as I am, impossible any longer to submit to. . . ."<sup>1</sup>

Mr Bloomfield, the Prince's Secretary, had apparently behaved like a cad, affording the last straw to break Mrs Fitzherbert's patience.

There followed a cry from the heart: "something is due to my character and conduct, both of which will bear the strictest character scrutiny, particularly with regard to everything that concerns Your Royal Highness, for after all that has passed between Your Royal Highness and myself I did not think human nature could have borne what I have had to undergo."

Minney Seymour had remained a link between Mrs Fitzherbert and the Prince. At the height of their

<sup>1</sup> *Fitzherbert Papers*, III.

## Mrs Fitzherbert's Revolt

estrangements they were corresponding about "our dear little Angel." *Mademoiselle* Corney, the first governess to whom Minney was entrusted, proved a failure. The Prince had written angrily in January of this year to Mrs Fitzherbert to dismiss her and send her to the devil. At the same time he enclosed £100 for her successor, Miss Jeffreys, who became a friend and worshipping confidante of Mrs Fitzherbert.

As a final bitterness Mrs Fitzherbert wrote in December of her exclusion from the Pavilion: "the disappointment to my dear little girl mortifies me very much."

The Prince answered as though he were the injured party (December 19, 1809):

"In whatever time, my dear Maria, that you may be pleased to write to me or in whatever way you may at any time think proper to act by me, deeply as I may feel and lament it, yet that never can nor shall make me deviate from or forget those affectionate feelings I have ever entertained for you. . . . With respect to the dear Child . . . she shall never under any circumstance experience any alteration from me . . . for as you may well recollect, I have told you how convinced I was and ever shall be of the innate excellence and sweetness of her dear little Heart, mind, nature and disposition. . . .

"PS I have made my brother William, as he at your desire saw your letter, acquainted with the contents of this."

By the end of the year came Mrs Fitzherbert's revolt from the golden fetters of the Pavilion. By that time they were hardly on writing terms, and the letters that passed between them were shown first to the good-natured Duke of Clarence. The Duke of Kent preferred to be left out of the brew and wrote (December 30, 1809):

"To implore that we *never* should touch upon that



## Mrs Fitzherbert

most delicate subject—the state of things between the Prince and yourself. Then I shall always be able, as I am now, conscientiously to say that you have never sought to intermeddle *me* in it, which I well know will always be the furthest thing from your thoughts.”<sup>1</sup>

This condition to their friendship Mrs Fitzherbert naturally kept, but she became the recipient of all his confidences and troubles. The Duke of Kent was a good-natured, unimaginitive, but practical friend. As a soldier he was a martinet and somewhat dreaded by the rank-and-file. As a lover he was generous and faithful to the poor soul with whom he lived for twenty-five years. Like his brother of Clarence his chief desire was for domestic family life. Both were impeded by the Royal Marriages Act from entering into Holy Matrimony with the women whom they loved. We find the Duke of Kent referring to his *liaison* in a letter to Mrs Fitzherbert (January 26, 1809):

“I know you will be sorry to hear that Madame de St Laurent has been confined to her room for six weeks with one of those violent coughs and rheumatic colds so that the house is quite an Hospital.”<sup>2</sup>

The Duke of Clarence maintained a domesticity with Mrs Jordan which was respectable all but in name. Mrs Jordan could not help feeling a mild jealousy when her Duke went to Brighton, for she scribbled:

“I hope Mrs Fitzherbert will be better if your coming home depends on that” and another time:

“Macmahon tells me that Lady Buckinghamshire and Mrs. Fitzherbert quarrelled before the latter left this place and that they call one another all sorts of names.”<sup>3</sup>

The Duke of Clarence wrote to his son from Portsmouth in 1809:

“The oftener you dine at Mrs Fitzherbert’s the

<sup>1</sup> *Fitzherbert Papers*, III.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *FitzClarence Papers*.

## Fitzclarence Spells

better. Remember me to her in the kindest manner possible." And on the same occasion: "I am sorry you are not well but this is an additional reason why you should remain where you are and particularly as Mrs Fitzherbert is so kind and attentive to you: my best wishes attend her."

FitzClarence was quartered at Brighton and left this letter from the Duke at Mrs Fitzherbert's:

"Your mother trusts you have gone down well to Brighton. I hope you called last night on Mrs Fitzherbert . . . I could not see the Prince as I was to dine with the Queen. The dinner was uncommonly pleasant and I had a very long and interesting conversation with the King. You must write frequently and believe that your mother and myself, whether present or absent, are attached to you in an unalterable manner, dear George, your most affec: father

WILLIAM."

And again:

"I have not much to say but to congratulate you on your promotion which I trust will be an additional reason to exert yourself to learn your duty. You must pay attention to your spelling and get someone to correct your English. Show this letter to Colonel Quintin with my best compliments. . . . Write frequently either to your mother or to me. She is in town and plays tomorrow at the Opera House. My best wishes and compliments attend Mrs Fitzherbert and give my love to Minney."<sup>1</sup>

Mrs Jordan was also troubled by his penmanship and wrote:

"Indeed, my dear George, this is of more consequence than you at present imagine. Only reflect how the Duke of York's letters and the spelling of the late Duke of Cumberland was ridiculed and is ever to this day."

<sup>1</sup> *Fitzherbert Papers*, III.

## Mrs Fitzherbert

Mrs Jordan was glad her son came under the influence of Steyne House, writing :

" Your Father is gone this morning to Windsor and desired me to write for him. He heard from Mrs Fitzherbert yesterday who says you have been very unwell but are getting well. The Duke of York business is going on I fear but badly. You are to tell Mrs Fitzherbert from your father that he wishes she would be so good as to introduce you to the Duchess of Bedford. It is reported that Lord Paget is dead killed in a duel by Henry Wellesley whose wife he ran away with last Monday. . . . Mrs Fitzherbert speaks very handsomely and kindly of you. I see by your spelling that you do not make use of your Dictionary."

In 1809 she wrote before he sailed to Spain :

" We got your letter yesterday and one today from Mrs Fitzherbert which made me very happy. You cannot be too grateful to that Lady both for her attention to you and the kind manner in which she speaks of you. I fancy tomorrow will be my last appearance in London."<sup>1</sup>

Before his son had set out to the wars in 1809 the Duke of Clarence sent him a sensible farewell letter, which for certain messages was passed on to Mrs Fitzherbert, in whose papers it remains :

" Dear George,—

" Your letter informing me your regiment is going abroad arrived yesterday. A soldier is always ready and happy to obey, and I make no doubt you will do your duty as you ought, and I trust in God you will be as fortunate as you were on the last occasion. Give my best compliments to Col. Quintin and desire him to work you well in the riding house, and you must make the most of your time to become a good horseman. I hope for your sake Mrs Fitzherbert will remain at Brighton till you march to embark. Thank her in

<sup>1</sup> *FitzClarence Papers.*

## From the Peninsula

my name for all her attention and goodness to you. Send me word what will be required by the officers, and consult Col. Quintin about everything. The less baggage you now know by experience the better. Only take what is useful and not ornamental. At the same time you must have what is ordered. Your mother goes on Saturday to Bath and Bristol, and will be absent between three and four weeks. She, Mrs. Sinclair, who is here, and your brothers and sisters write in love and best wishes, and I remain your affec. father,

“ WILLIAM.”

During his long campaigns in the Peninsula, Fitz-Clarence's thoughts were always with Minney Seymour. Often he wrote to her and sometimes to Mrs Fitzherbert:

“ LEGACA (*August 4, 1813*)

“ I cannot refrain from congratulating you, my dear Mrs Fitzherbert, upon a most splendid victory we have gained over the enemy. We have fought some most desperate battles, and have always come off with victory. Horace is well, and what is not of so much consequence to a young lady in your house, so am I and my brother. Horace had his horse shot. Mine was grazed on the nose with a ball. Since the 25th ult. the French have lost 16,000 men, we 7,000. I refer you to the *Gazette* for leading facts, as I have not time to give an account of our most gallant exploits. Never has anything shown Lord Wellington to more advantage or the British soldier's courage more than these operations. We have taken great part of the enemy's baggage and 4,000 prisoners. Captain Harding is slightly wounded. I have been in France. I send you oak leaves I took from a tree to crown myself conqueror. The Prince of Orange takes the despatches home. I send Minney some box I wore in my hat during the whole of the action, as it was fought on the anniversary of Talavera.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Fitzherbert Papers*, III.

## Mrs Fitzherbert

The time was approaching for Mrs Fitzherbert to begin to put her house in order. She had always piqued herself that neither her house in Tilney Street nor her newly-built house in Brighton had cost the Prince a farthing. Apart from the cost of the ground she had paid Porden the sum of £6000 for building her Brighton house. To her great annoyance Porden had exceeded the estimate by £300 which she found herself unable to meet. Porden, believing she was able to pay further by appealing to the Prince, allowed her to be threatened with arrest, and she wrote to the Prince :

“ I shall feel no degradation in going to jail. It is no debt of extravagant folly but a circumstance which will happen now and then : that of being deceived by those we place confidence in.”<sup>1</sup>

In the same letter she pointed out her exact financial position. She recalled that the Prince had from the beginning of their association pledged himself to Mr Errington to allow her £10,000 a year. She had always been willing to accept £3000, though of late this had been increased to £5000.

Avarice played a very small part in Mrs Fitzherbert's life. She could have enriched herself immensely. A less high-minded Sultana would have insisted on the full payment of the £10,000 a year and relieved the Prince of very much more by threats and menaces. There is no figure at which accomplished blackmailers would not have aimed with such a document as the Marriage Certificate in their possession. But honourable position and repute was her desire rather than riches. That the Prince wished the public to gain the impression that she was his cast-off mistress was as true as it was cruel. Not only was the Regency upon him, but the perilous question of Catholic Emancipation was rising, and he was doubly anxious to show

<sup>1</sup> *Fitzherbert Papers*, III.

## Parson's Green

the public that he was no longer under the influence of a Catholic lady.

Rather than live in Town, where she was subject to curiosity and gossip, Mrs Fitzherbert decided to live at a country villa at Parson's Green. This she explained to the Prince she had not purchased in the midst of her debts: she had been helped by the generosity of her friends to obtain a home, "which I am sure I shall find great comfort to myself and advantage to my child, which has been the primary object of a small place in the country and being so near Town, she will have the same advantage as if in London."<sup>1</sup>

The chance discovery of some old deeds (British Records Association) has enabled us to date Mrs Fitzherbert's tenure of her villa at Parson's Green. On June 29, 1808, she signed an Indenture taking certain premises bounded on the West side by Parson's Green on the South by the King's Highway leading from London to Fulham, and on the East by a piece of marshy ground called Hell<sup>2</sup> Brook, some sixteen acres altogether. The premises had lately been occupied as a Public House under the sign of the Peterborough Arms. She paid £1260 for the Lease and £200 a year Rent. Two years later she signed a receipt for £2000 paid to her for an assignment of the said premises (November 5, 1810).

Later she bought a Villa with grounds in Battersea which as Sherwood Lodge became Mrs Fitzherbert's domicile for six years until she brought Minney Seymour out as a young Lady of Fashion and prospect.

The Regency entailed a new government and it was expected that the Regent would offer his old friends of the stormy years such fruits of office as he now controlled. He did not send for the Whigs. Strangely he sent for Mrs Fitzherbert from Brighton,

<sup>1</sup> *Fitzherbert Papers*, III.

<sup>2</sup> Eel Brook (*Six-inch Ordnance Survey*).

## Mrs Fitzherbert

“ to give her opinion on a step of great political importance which he was about to take, but her influence then had been some time on the wane. He told her, that he had sent for her to ask her opinion, and that he demanded it from her, with regard to the party to which he was about, as Regent, to confide the administration of the country. At his commands, she urged in the most forcible manner she was able, his adherence to his former political friends. Knowing all his engagements to that party, she used every argument and every entreaty to induce him not to sever himself from them. ‘ Only retain them, Sir, six weeks in power. If you please, you may find some pretext to dismiss them, at the end of that time; but do not break with them without some pretext or other.’ Such was her request to him. He answered: It was impossible as he had promised; but at the same time she observed he seemed much overpowered by the effort it cost him. Finding that resistance to a determination so fixed was unavailing, she asked to be allowed to return to Brighton, which she did; but previously to leaving him, she said, that as he had done her the honour of imposing upon her his commands of freely declaring her sentiments upon this occasion, she hoped he would permit her, before she left him, to offer one suggestion which she trusted he would not take amiss.

“ She then urged upon him, as strongly as she was able, the disadvantages which must accrue to his future happiness from treating his daughter the Princess Charlotte with so little kindness. ‘ You now, Sir,’ she said, ‘ may mould her at your pleasure, but soon it will not be so; and she may become, from mismanagement, a thorn in your side for life.’ ‘ That is your opinion, Madam,’ was his only reply.”<sup>1</sup>

The date of this meeting can be calculated to have been January 31.

(February 6, 1811) “ Last week I think last Thursday [January 31] Mrs Fitzherbert came suddenly to town

<sup>1</sup> *Lord Stourton's Narrative.*

## A Visit from Creevey

by the Prince's desire and he was with her the greatest part of the day and then returned again immediately to Brighthelmstone. It was the day before his resolution of continuing the Ministers was supposed to have been taken. The Duchess of Gordon said she had heard that some of the adherents of the present Ministry intended to have called on the Prince to declare before he should take the oaths for the Regency whether he was not married to a Papist."<sup>1</sup>

It was clear that the Prince had no intention of taking her excellent advice on either a matter of politics or family. Mrs Fitzherbert had no love for the Whig leader, Lord Grey, who had refused to espouse her cause on a memorable occasion in the House of Commons. Only her sense of justice compelled her to advise the Regent to give him a chance in office. But the Whigs were tarred with the cause of Catholic Emancipation and the Regent decided to retain Mr Perceval as Premier. Mr Perceval had led against Mrs Fitzherbert in the Seymour Case and was the choice of Lady Hertford. No doubt the Regent had wished to know from Mrs Fitzherbert what there was to be said for their old friends, but the day of the Whigs had not arrived. Lord Grey's opportunity came in the following reign twenty years later.

Meantime the distich ran true :

“ Nought's permanent among the human race  
Except the Whigs not getting into place.”

The Whigs never forgave the Prince save old Creevey, whose head remained constant towards the rising Sun. Creevey scribbled (February 2, 1811):

“ I said all I thought to Sheridan in vindication of Prinney, but I presume I am wrong as I stand single in this opinion. I went however to Mrs Fitzherbert at twelve today, an appointment I made with her yesterday in the street, and she and I were agreed upon this

<sup>1</sup> *Glenberrie Papers.*



## Mrs Fitzherbert

subject. Mrs Fitzherbert is evidently delighted at the length and forgiving and confidential nature of Prinney's visits."

The old order had passed. The King was now completely insane and the Regent took his oaths as ruler of the Three Kingdoms (February 5, 1811). In the summer a magnificent party was announced for Carlton House to celebrate the Regency and also to honour the Royal Family of France. The son of the demented entertained the family of the decapitated. As Lord Stourton recounted, Mrs Fitzherbert was invited, but not given the special place she had been accustomed to hold at the Royal Table. Mrs Fitzherbert asked for an audience that she might receive this culminating affront from the Regent's own lips. Their brief conversation was recorded by Lord Stourton and the following day Mrs Fitzherbert wrote to the Regent (June 7, 1811) a letter of which she retained a copy "written to the Prince when persuaded by Lady Hertford not to admit me to his table."

In this letter she simply reminded him that he was "excluding the person who is not unjustly suspected by the world of possessing in silence unassumed and unsustained a Rank given her by yourself above that of any other person present."<sup>1</sup>

There was no more to be said. Mrs Fitzherbert made a last dignified but unyielding curtsey backwards and disappeared into the shadows.

Accordingly she remained at home and it was remarked by the company that "both wives" were at their own fireside. The situation was not lost on Thomas Hardy when he came to write *The Dynasts*.

### " CHORUS OF THE IRONIC SPIRITS

A wife of the body, a wife of the mind:  
A wife somewhat frowsy, a wife too refined——  
Could the twain but grow one and no other dames be,  
No husband in Europe more steadfast than he!"

<sup>1</sup> *Fitzherbert Papers*, III.

## Dinner to Louis XVIII

The Princess of Wales was not invited at all, but was kind enough to allow her Ladies-in-Waiting to attend the greatest party of the reign.

The story is fully described in Lord Stourton's narrative :

“ A dinner given to Louis XVIII brought matters at last to a conclusion; and satisfied of a systematic intention to degrade her before the public, she then at last attained the reluctant assent of some of the members of the Royal Family to her determination of finally closing her connection with the Prince, to whom, in furtherance of this decision, she never afterwards opened the doors of her house. Upon all former occasions, to avoid etiquette in circumstances of such delicacy as regarded her own situation with reference to the Prince, it had been customary to sit at table without regard to rank. Upon the present occasion this plan was to be altered, and Mrs Fitzherbert was informed through her friends at Court, that at the Royal table the individuals invited were to sit according to their rank.

“ When assured of this novel arrangements, she asked the Prince, who had invited her with the rest of his company, where she was to sit. He said. ‘ You know, Madam, you have no place.’ ‘ None Sir,’ she replied, ‘ but such as you choose to give me.’ Upon this she informed the Royal Family that she would not go. The Duke of York and others endeavoured to alter the preconceived arrangement, but the Prince was inflexible; and aware of the peculiar circumstances of her case, and the distressing nature of her general situation, they no longer hesitated to agree with her, that no advantage was to be obtained by further postponement of her own anxious desire to close her connection with the Prince, and to retire once more into private life. She told me, she often looked back with wonder that she had not sunk under the trials of those two years.

“ Having come to this resolution, she was obliged, on the very evening, or on that which followed the

## Mrs Fitzherbert

Royal dinner, to attend an assembly at Devonshire House, which was the last evening she saw the Prince previously to their final separation. The Duchess of Devonshire, taking her by the arm, said to her: 'You must come and see the Duke in his own room, as he is suffering from a fit of the gout, but he will be glad to see an old friend.' In passing through the rooms, she saw the Prince and Lady Hertford in a tête-à-tête conversation, and nearly fainted under all the impressions which then rushed upon her mind, but, taking a glass of water, she recovered and passed on.

"Thus terminated this fatal, ill-starred connection, so unfortunate, probably, for both the parties concerned."<sup>1</sup>

Henceforth Mrs Fitzherbert never spoke to her husband. They avoided each other as much as possible. Only rarely they met in the great world which as lovers they had defied and against which they could have stood together to the end. The world was as much provoked to gossip by their parting as by their former communion. Sir Henry Holland witnessed one of their few passages like ships passing in the night. "I witnessed once, when meeting the Prince Regent and Mrs Fitzherbert in the same room at Bridgewater House, that rejection of every intercourse on *her* part which gave origin to so many anecdotes, true or false, on the subject." On another occasion when Mrs Fitzherbert was taking Minney Seymour out she met the Regent coming down the stairs of some great mansion. He stopped to speak to "our dear little Angel," while Mrs Fitzherbert swept onward without betraying the least emotion on her countenance. They knew well the art of cutting each other in the grand manner of other days. But there was no scene, no agitation. Simply they ignored each other and left the world, to which they had never communicated the circumstances of their union, to draw what conclusions it wished concerning their final separation.

<sup>1</sup> *Lord Stourton's Narrative.*

## CHAPTER IX

*Titus:*                   No! However low I lie  
My glory tracks me down inexorably.  
It calls to my astonished soul: Beware!  
This marriage in thine Empire has no share.  
And after all the scandal and the strife  
Still less than ever can you be my wife  
And think not, lady, in my bitter woe  
That for thy sake I'd let the Empire go.

RACINE (*Berenice*).

*Marianne:*                                   Your pain  
Was but the fancied torture of a dream,  
But wounds of honour bleed for ever new.  
Their anguish is sincere. My fame must bear  
The blast of censure and the lettered spleen  
Of future story.

*Herod:*       No, thy fame will shine  
More bright, emerging from this short eclipse.  
The marks of envy give distinguished grace  
To virtue.

ELIJAH FENTON (*Marianne*).

THE Prince could never dismiss her memory from his heart though he showed it distantly. Lady Bessborough picked up a curious story from Sir Henry Halford which she transmitted to Lord Granville (December 31, 1811). "Lady Hertford is so fond of diamonds that the Prince's finances can hardly suffice. Notwithstanding which, to be just in his dealings and make all even, he has ordered Colonel McMahon to write to Mrs Fitzherbert assuring her of his regard and good wishes and sending her a fine necklace as a New Year's gift. Were I her, the beauty of the necklace would not make up to me for the letter from Colonel McMahon!" However, according to Halford the Regent's fingers were too numb with rings and jewellery to write himself.

## Mrs Fitzherbert

Before the end of the following year Mrs Fitzherbert had reason to write to the Regent (October 25, 1812):

"Do not, Sir, by contemptuous silence compel me for my own justification to appeal to the opinions of impartial persons by shewing them my letters to you on this occasion, that they may judge whether or not I have said anything in them to merit the treatment I have met with."<sup>1</sup>

How puzzling her position remained appears in a letter written by Mrs Richard Trench from Cheltenham in 1812:

"Mrs Fitzherbert was judiciously invited to a fête by Colonel ——— in honour of the Princess Charlotte's birthday. He first treated Mrs Fitzherbert as Regentess by leading her into the supper room before all the women of rank, and then gave toasts and made orations upon the merits of the Prince and Princess and the lovely fruit of their union. Was ever such folly, inconsistency and want of feeling?"

Henceforth Mrs Fitzherbert was sunk in retirement and only visible by glimpses. Lady Verulam wrote to Mary Frampton (July 2, 1814):

"We met yesterday Mrs Fitzherbert and her *protégée* [Minney Seymour]. She was driving herself in one of the fashionable carriages. They have four wheels and one horse and go at a great rate. One could not help moralising, as the road she was on was the very one on which the Princess of Wales was driven almost every day in her phaeton."

The two wives also shared the same Doctor in Sir Henry Holland and the same Banker in Mr Coutts. But these two rather important coincidences were probably due to their sharing or having shared the same husband. Sir Henry Holland recorded:

"That I was called to Mrs Fitzherbert as a patient at no long time after I had left the Princess of Wales

<sup>1</sup> *Fitzherbert Papers*, III.

## An Accusation Refuted

in Italy. I continued to attend her for many successive years, seeing much of her on other occasions. The contrast of character was not less remarkable than that parity in one relation of life which associated their names in the Court History of the day."<sup>1</sup>

The relations of the two ladies, though distant, were never strained.

According to the *Glenbervic Diaries* Mrs Fitzherbert wished to send word to the Princess by Sir Henry Englefield that she was being spied upon (December 21, 1810):

"The Prince divides his time daily between Lady Hertford and Mrs Fitzherbert. She and Sir Henry being of the same religion are well acquainted and neighbours in Tilney St."

A month later Mrs Fitzherbert decided to leave the country, but not before she had addressed the Regent some words of burning self-justification (August 13, 1814):

"I have been accused of entering in Cabals against Your Royal Highness and doing you all the mischief in my power. No asseverations are necessary on my part. I disdain the charge. The evidences of the contrary are with me, and I thank the Almighty that throughout all my bitter trials I have hitherto had forbearance enough never to utter one syllable that could have affected your interests, made you an enemy or given you any cause of resentment towards me."<sup>2</sup>

During the Regency Mrs Fitzherbert often came into Tom Moore's Diaries. They had met in the good old days of her Romance. Moore had written to his mother how he was introduced to Mrs Fitzherbert at a little supper after the Opera when she was with the Prince. Perhaps her affection for Lord

<sup>1</sup> Sir Henry Holland: *Recollections of Past Life*.

<sup>2</sup> *Fitzherbert Papers*, III.

## Mrs Fitzherbert

Edward Fitzgerald had drawn her to Moore, for she became a subscriber to his *Anacreon* in 1800 and persuaded the Prince to accept the dedication.

When the Prince abandoned the cause of the Whigs and of Ireland and of the Catholics, Moore reproached him with a famous poem which caused a great sensation when sung at Chatsworth in 1815, for everyone recognised the Prince therein :

“ When first I met thee, warm and young,  
There shone such truth about thee,  
And on thy lip such promise hung,  
I did not dare to doubt thee.  
I saw thee changed, yet still relied,  
Still clung with hope the fonder,  
And thought, though false to all beside  
From me thou couldst not wander.”

As some mistook the supposed speaker for Mrs Fitzherbert, Moore wrote to his publisher to be careful to date “ The Prince’s Song ” 1789, “ and it will prevent the confusion of supposing it to be Mrs Fitzherbert or some deserted mistress instead of Ireland.”

The Prince liked Mrs Fitzherbert to know when he was ill and the last communication he sent her was the official statement of the assault made on him (January 28, 1817):

“ H.R.H. the Prince Regent was assaulted in his carriage as He returned in State today from the House of Lords and his Person endangered.”<sup>1</sup>

In 1817 Miss Seymour was brought out into Society and her name was printed on Mrs Fitzherbert’s visiting cards. She remained the great interest of the Regent who signed himself in his letters to her “ your father by adoption.” As Professor Charles Webster says, Mrs Fitzherbert henceforth passed out of the Regent’s affairs and “ only appears in connection with the Prince’s daughter, Minney Seymour, a tie that still

<sup>1</sup> *Swynnerton Papers.*

## Louis Philippe is Gallant

connected them when all other had been severed." He wrote invariably upon her birthday (November 23) during the rest of his lifetime and she answered sweetly and discreetly with mention of "The lady under whose roof I have the honour to dwell." On the day before her birthday in 1818 he wrote, although he was submerged in grief, "having so recently lost my best, most revered, and most beloved of mothers."

Minney was always invited to the Pavilion. On January 7, 1817, the birthday of the Princess Charlotte, "the ball was opened by the Duke of Clarence and Lady Cholmondeley, Prince Esterhazy, and the Hon Miss Seymour." The following week the Grand Duke Nicholas arrived from Russia and was entertained as the Royal guest at the Pavilion. "The Grand Duke's partner during the Ball was generally the Hon Miss Seymour, ward of Mrs Fitzherbert."

This Prince of Muscovy founded the Cesarewitch Race at Newmarket before he became the Emperor of Russia against whom the Crimean War was directed.

Another future Sovereign who figured from time to time in Mrs Fitzherbert's circle was Louis Philippe. He had known her in Twickenham days. As Duc de Chartres he wrote her a note:

*"Le Duc de Chartres executera avec empressement toutes les ordres de Madame Fitzherbert. Si elle desirait qu'il lui rapportât quelque chose d'Angleterre il la supplie de le lui faire savoir. Il sera heureux toutes les fois qu'il pourra lui être util."*<sup>1</sup>

Other notes survive in the *Fitzherbert Papers* at Glaslough:

Twickenham (January 17, 1806)

"The Duke of Orleans presents his compliments to

<sup>1</sup> "The Duke of Chartres will eagerly carry out all Mrs Fitzherbert's orders. If she wishes him to bring her back anything from England, he begs her to let him know. He will be happy every time he can be useful to her"—*Mrs Dawson-Damer's Autograph Book*.



## Mrs Fitzherbert

Mrs Fitzherbert and incloses Major Bloomfield's letter to Count Beaujolois from which he inferred it was more respectful to the Prince to remain silent on that subject."

" Dear Madam

" If tomorrow Monday at four o'clock was not inconvenient I would then be ready to receive you, as you so kindly requested it. Believe me with great regard, dear Madam, your affectionate L. P."

Twickenham (April 5, 1817)

" Dear Madam

" You are very kind and I am very grateful for your kindness. It has been a mistake of your servant to have stated that I would call yesterday upon you, since it was only today that I was gone to town. I propose calling upon you today between two and three o'clock and I will be much gratified to see you and to hear you before my departure, although I hope I will still have the pleasure of seeing you in a short time in Paris. With great regard, dear Madam, ever yours L. P. d'Orleans."

(July 18, 1815)

" Dear Madam,

" I thank you with all my heart for your past, present and *future* kindness to me for which I am very grateful: Yours affectly L. P. d'Orleans."

The Duke of Clarence wrote to his son in July: " The improvements are going on at the Pavilion and will take three years to complete. Mrs Fitzherbert, with Minney, is going abroad, but will be the winter at Brighton." By that time poor FitzClarence was hopelessly in love with Minney.

On August 5, 1817, Mrs Fitzherbert set out for Namur with Minney and Mrs and Miss Fremantle. In October Mrs Fitzherbert and Minney visited Paris where they were received by the Royal Family. A

## John William Croker

surviving scrap of official paper shows that Mrs Fitzherbert had already been received at the Tuileries in audience by the King on Sunday, February 12, 1815.

She returned to Brighton for Christmas and the New Year, but the Pavilion was gloomy with mourning for the tragic death of the Princess Charlotte, heir-apparent to the Throne.

"As to the Princess Charlotte Mrs Fitzherbert said the Prince was much attached to her for some years, indeed he was generally fond of children and young people, and it was only when the Princess Charlotte became the subject of constant altercation betwixt him and those who took part with Queen Caroline that he at last began to see her with more coolness. Upon one occasion, Mrs Fitzherbert told me, she was much affected by the Princess Charlotte throwing her arms round her neck, and beseeching her to speak to her father, that he would receive her with greater marks of his affection; and she told me that she could not help weeping with this interesting child."

The Regent had collected a new adulator in John Wilson Croker, who could make himself useful in the Press. As "Rigby," Croker was savagely defamed by Disraeli and knocked about by Macaulay under his own name in one of his Essays. Croker took note of affairs at Brighton and wondered at Mrs Fitzherbert (December 7, 1818) "living here and bearding the Prince in a way so indelicate, *vis-à-vis* the public, and, as I should have thought, so embarrassing to herself. To her presence is attributed the Prince's never going abroad at Brighton. . . . I cannot see how poor old Mrs Fitzherbert can cause him any uneasiness."

"One reason why Mrs Fitzherbert may like this place is that she is treated as Queen at least of Brighton. They don't quite *Highness* her in her domestic circle but they *Madam* her prodigiously, and

<sup>1</sup> *Lord Stourton's Narrative.*

## Mrs Fitzherbert

stand up longer for her arrival than for ordinary folks, and in short, go as near to acknowledging her for *Princess* as they can, without actually giving her the title: when she dines out she expects to be led out to dinner before Peeresses—mighty foolish all this! The Duke of York still keeps up a correspondence with her, for Seymour mentioned she had had a letter from H.R.H. this morning.”<sup>1</sup>

In all the Royal Family her great friend was now the Duke of York. The loss of her correspondence with him is irreparable. However much he was abused and treated to the jeers of slander, his character was much as Mrs Fitzherbert described in writing to an applicant (March 6, 1822):

“I can see no reason why you should not explain to him in writing the state of your affairs. He is so good-natured and kind-hearted that I am sure if it is in his power to ameliorate your sufferings he will have great pleasure in doing so.”

The Duke of York during his remaining years was now heir to the Throne, which he had nobly declined to envisage in the light of the Regent's forfeiture. It was a testimony to both their characters that the Duke, while leader of Protestant sentiment against Catholic Emancipation, should remain devoted to an out-and-out Catholic like Mrs Fitzherbert. Though her religion remained almost unnoticeable in the background, there was no doubt in the mind of the public. Her private creed became unfortunately a national concern. Gifford pointed out in his *Political Life of Pitt*:

“Whether or not Mrs Fitzherbert was prepared to sacrifice her religion for the prospect of a Throne, it is not now worth while to inquire; but it is very certain that since the period in question she has openly professed the Romish Faith and had her regular director,

<sup>1</sup> *Croker Papers*.

## Royal Marriages

who has boasted and probably not without reason that she is though a secret, a very staunch friend to the cause of Popery."

The Duchess of York did not recognise Mrs Fitzherbert. As a German Princess she had concluded that it was simply a morganatic marriage and needed no notice on her part. She herself had failed of progeny.

The Duke of Cumberland was married and possibly in the succession, but he was still childless. The remaining Dukes were apprised of their matrimonial duties to provide an heir to the Crown and incidentally to cut the detested Cumberland out of the succession. The Duke of Clarence informed his first-born son, George FitzClarence, "that both *public* and *private* duty conspired to make me see the absolute necessity of marrying a Princess: in addition to which I had the consolation to believe that, as Princes marry, I was fortunate indeed in having for my future wife the Princess Adelaide of Saxe-Meiningen."<sup>1</sup>

In May, 1818, the Duke of Kent married abroad. In June the Duke of Cambridge followed suit and on July 11 the Duke of Clarence; a day on which Kent repeated his marriage at Kew to ensure the British legality of a match which had enormous consequences to England. The Duke of Cambridge had a boy who for two months was the ultimate heir to the Throne.

The Duke of Kent paid a farewell visit to Mrs Fitzherbert on the evening of August 25, 1818. He heralded his approach by a note assuring her "that you have *never been out of my thoughts*" and that "nothing but the situation I have been placed in for the last seven weeks could have made me either abstain from writing or calling." This was a quaint allusion to his honeymoon. He immediately proceeded abroad and Mrs Fitzherbert never saw him again.

<sup>1</sup> *FitzClarence Papers.*

## Mrs Fitzherbert

The Duke of Kent's previous travels abroad, his meetings with Madame de St Laurent, and his first view of eligible German Princesses were all described in letters to Mrs Fitzherbert, who later was expected to clear up the affairs of his mistress, Madame de St Laurent. After the birth of Princess Victoria and the death of the Duke of Kent, Louis Philippe wrote to Mrs Fitzherbert (April 27, 1820):

"You have been so good and kind to my lamented friend the Duke of Kent and also to Madame de Montgenet<sup>1</sup> that I must send you duplicates of all the letters that are now going to London in her behalf. You will see that I have followed your good advice and I am sure if you can give her a lift, you will do it. Perhaps if you were to show these papers to the Duke of York, his usual kindness might induce him to say a few words to the King on the subject and nothing could be more efficient. I am very glad to hear of your safe arrival in London and I regret that you do not think of visiting us in Paris for some time. I hope that you will change your mind, if we continue to be quiet and peaceable."<sup>2</sup>

Before the year was out we find Mrs Fitzherbert welcoming old Creevey back to Brighton (December 28, 1819):

"You would scarcely know Brighton. It is so enlarged since you were here, and is at this moment so full there is not a house to be had. I cannot boast of much society which formerly we abounded with at this season. When I tell you that 52 public coaches go from hence to London every day and bring people down for six shillings, you will not be surprised at the sort of company we have besides which the Royal Palace attracts numbers who are puzzled to know what to make of the appearance of the building which it is impossible for me, or indeed anyone else to describe.

<sup>1</sup> Family name of Madame de St Laurent. <sup>2</sup> *Fitzherbert Papers*, III.

## The King Dies

"The Regent and all his household are here, but as he never stirs out of his parlour, and no one sees him, it makes no alteration in our proceedings. Minney desires me to assure you and all her kind friends of her best wishes."<sup>1</sup>

Mrs Fitzherbert lived in "Coventry" during the Regency. According to Tierney, Sir John Leach might have been Chancellor, "but that his name is now in the black book of Hertford House and, of course, at the Pavilion in consequence of his having dined with Mrs Fitzherbert either at his house or hers."<sup>2</sup>

With the New Year of 1820 events moved apace. The Duke of Kent died on January 23 and six days later the poor old King, blind and mad, but loved and respected by his subjects, died at midnight. Mrs Fitzherbert's husband became King of England under the title of George IV.

Whether George III ever knew for certain that he was her father-in-law or not, he appears to have appreciated her. According to a MS note of Sir George Seymour: "In one of the Documents lodged at Messrs Coutts purporting to be a Will of the Prince of Wales there is a strong expression of his gratitude to both the King and Queen for their kindness to Mrs Fitzherbert."

In the Will there is no mention of the Queen, but there is the strongest expression of filial gratitude to the King for promising to continue Mrs Fitzherbert's pension in case of the Prince's death. Subsequently by message and by action the Royal couple showed their gratitude to a woman whose influence and friendship was so considerable and beneficent amongst their sons. So passed George III, the well-meaning but humdrum Monarch of England at her greatest. He was the father of seven stalwart sons and from him is descended the seed of all Royalty living. Let us

<sup>1</sup> *Creevey Papers.*

<sup>2</sup> *Glenberrie Diaries.*

## Mrs Fitzherbert

record the famous inscription which was once proposed for his pedestal :

“ A monarch, who was the safeguard of Christianity without the honour of a Saint : and the Conqueror of half the globe without the fame of a hero : who reigned amid the wreck of Empires yet died in the love of his People : when British valour was without a rival and British character without a stain.”

The new King indulged his taste for the dramatic and picturesque to the full. He lived up to his own pageant and planned himself a superb Coronation at which neither wife nor Queen need be present. Mrs Fitzherbert was not likely to give him any trouble. But Queen Caroline was anxious to claim her position. After six years of shabby and disreputable touring on the Continent she prepared to descend upon her spouse. Her position was something betwixt a Catherine of Aragon and a Tichborne Claimant, combining the status of one with the vulgarity of the other. The King had her tried for high misdemeanours.

During the Queen's trial both sides kept Trump cards up their sleeves without having to play them. In a letter to Lord Lowther, Croker wrote that if necessary the prosecution intended to accuse the Queen of intent to corrupt her own daughter the Princess Charlotte.

Evidence, incredible enough, exists to show that the mother threw her daughter to the attentions of Captain Hesse who was the bastard son of the Duke of York. He was appropriately killed in a duel by a bastard son of the Emperor Napoleon.<sup>1</sup>

On the other side the defence were threatening to reveal the King's marriage with Mrs Fitzherbert.

<sup>1</sup> ASPINALL: *Letters of George IV.*



GEORGE PRINCE OF WALES

From the painting by John Hoppner

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## Brougham Threatens

When making his great speech at the Queen's trial, Brougham uttered a veiled threat :

" . . . if I did not think that the Cause of the Queen, as attempted to be established by the evidence against her, not only does not require recrimination at present—not only imposes no duty of even uttering one whisper, whether by way of attack or by way of insinuation, against the conduct of her illustrious husband—but that it rather prescribes to me, for the present, silence upon this great and painful head of the case—I solemnly assure your Lordships that but for this conviction my lips on that branch would not be closed; for in discretionally abandoning the exercise of the power which I feel I have, in postponing for the present the statement of that case of which I am possessed, I feel confident that I am waiving a right which I possess and abstaining from the use of materials which are mine . . . nay separating even the duties of a patriot from those of an advocate and casting them, if need be, to the wind, he must go on reckless of the consequences, if his fate it should unhappily be to involve his country in confusion for his client's protection."

In after years Tom Moore met Brougham at Lord Denman's and noted in his *Diary* (December 20, 1824) :

" Talked of the Regency Question. The able article in the *Edinburgh Review* was written, Brougham says, by Allen ; Brougham seemed to lay great stress upon the marriage with Mrs Fitzherbert and the forfeiture of the Crown thereby; the nullity of the marriage having nothing to do with the forfeiture. Mentioned a parallel case in law, where a man in consigning an estate might do what would forfeit his own claim to it, though it was null in the law and could not confer any title to it on another. On Charles Butler saying he wondered this was not thought of during the Queen's Trial, Brougham said that it was thought of; the only witness however to the marriage was dead."

## Mrs Fitzherbert

Brougham afterwards wrote a strong correction of Moore :

" So far the account is correct; but a gross error is added, namely that Butler asked me why we did not make the Fitzherbert Marriage our proof of it. This I never said or could say, for we had well considered it and knew that we had the means of proving the marriage. Butler took an interest in the subject beyond that of most people from being a strict Catholic."

Furthermore :

" We were not in possession of all the circumstances as I have since ascertained them, but we had enough to prove the fact. Mrs Fitzherbert's uncle Mr Errington, who was present at the marriage was still alive; and though no doubt he would have had a right to refuse answering a question to which an affirmative answer exposed him to the pains and penalties of a *premunire*, denounced against any person present at such a marriage, it was almost certain that on Mrs Fitzherbert's behalf he would have waived the protection and given his testimony to prove the marriage but even his refusal would have left the conviction in all men's minds that the marriage had taken place. However there existed ample evidence, which Errington would undoubtedly have enabled us to produce without the possibility of incurring any penalty whatever. Mrs Fitzherbert was possessed of a Will of the Prince in her favor, signed with his own hand, if not written entirely by himself and in which he calls her his dear wife. I had a copy of this, if not the original, given me by her favorite and adopted child, who naturally took a warm interest in defending the memory of her friend and protectress."

So recorded Brougham in his *Memoirs*, but Minney Seymour could not have given him a copy of the Will, which she never saw and which passed into Coutts' Bank. Possibly Mrs Fitzherbert may have allowed him

## Brougham Corrects Croker

a copy, but she herself, rather than be called as a witness during the Queen's trial, preferred to slip over to Paris taking the vital documents with her. One of Minney's daughters recorded Brougham as "the ugliest caricature of the human face divine I can remember." He was nicknamed Beelzebub.

In great old age Brougham corrected Croker on an article he had written in the *Quarterly* (April 19, 1854):

"I lose no time in setting you right about a very important point of history, namely the Fitzherbert marriage. I see you more than half lean to a belief in it, but you may at once change that into an entire belief. I could have proved it in 1820. I had as my witness H. Errington, Mrs Fitzherbert's uncle, who no doubt would have sheltered himself under the privilege of not committing himself, for he incurred a *Praemunire* by being present. Mrs Fitzherbert in like manner; and I had a communication from her in great alarm and I rather think I quieted her with a promise not to call her; but of this I am not certain. Errington was enough for me and his refusal would have been as good as his saying yes.

"It was this, and not at all recrimination to which I alluded mysteriously, and in a way that has been much censured when I spoke of throwing the country into confusion . . . a forfeiture of the Crown or at least a disputed succession and I am quite confident, from some things Hutchinson told me, that George IV was aware of what the real trump was that I had in my hand."

Mrs Fitzherbert had no reason to be hostile to the King, for as soon as he became King he did what he could to relieve her from the miseries which befell her during the Regency. She had then sold many of her jewels to meet the debts incurred in the years when she was living with him. But although her allowance was doubled from £3,000 to £6,000 in 1811, no economies could ward off difficulties. As King he ful-

## Mrs Fitzherbert

filled his better instinct and added £4,000 to her income. She had of course undertaken the education and maintenance of Minney Seymour. In 1820 and onwards she possessed sufficient, though she felt a certain bitterness that it had come too late. There is a curious letter from Lady Anne Barnard dated from this year :

“ I wish I had leisure to make you laugh at a visit I had from the Fitz in compliment by way to inform me of what I had asked her the truth of two months ago (which she then knew to be a fact but never told me) I mean the additional 4000 *per ann* now remitted her by the King. She affected not to care three straws about it—as he had not given it to her when she needed it. She said the Duke of Kent asked if she would not find it convenient now—I told him—said she—that the only way the money could give me any pleasure would be to have it in guineas and throw it at the King’s head and knock him down with it—If you did—said he—he would pick up the gold and pocket the affront—There goes a specimen of the exalted sentiment of the great. You and I are very poor creatures. We would neither knock down our false lovers nor expect our loves to enrich themselves by our cash.”<sup>1</sup>

Mr Aspinall quoting from George IV’s accounts says officially :

“ In October 1801 the Prince increased Mrs Fitzherbert’s pension from £3000 to 4000. Later it was increased to £6000 and finally in April 1820 to £10,000.”<sup>2</sup>

Mrs Fitzherbert disappeared from George IV papers, but perhaps not from his thoughts. As Prof. Charles Webster says : “ above all the wife of his youth was amongst the troubles ” menacing his peace of mind. He could never forget her. He felt that her existence in separation from him left his life incomplete. He recalled less the rosy radiance of their romance than

<sup>1</sup> *Barnard Papers.*

<sup>2</sup> *Windsor Archives.*

## Lady Hertford Retired

the singular results which though never public property remained closely under the surface. He was a bigamist in her eyes and knowledge. Owing to her he had really forfeited the Throne to which he ascended with a long deferred joy.

As King, the Regent retired Lady Hertford from his presence and affections and adopted the Marchioness of Conyngham. Their cooings were profound but elderly. He appointed her his Lady Steward and employed her as his constant companion and the slave of his vanity. He found her comfortable and she found him lucrative. She soothed and humoured him and, as her views were liberal, she was a good influence on his. Lady Conyngham was foolish to be jealous of Mrs Fitzherbert and to keep the King away from Brighton as far as possible. She seems to have spoken to the King unkindly about poor little Minney. In the world of Court and diplomacy she was regarded as his mistress. The boredom and emoluments of that position were hers, but no one would seriously suppose there could be any romance or passion between the portly friends. The King was growing fatter and fatter. The emotions of his youth and the activities of his manhood were lost in indolence. He was content with the expanses of Lady Conyngham's virtuous bosom. She could have worn the motto which a school-boy said was worn by the mistresses of English Kings on their garters: *Honi soit qui mal y pense*.

## CHAPTER X

Ye gods! annihilate but space and time  
And make two lovers happy.—POPE.

MRS FITZHERBERT'S life for the next five years was centred on Minney, whose love-affairs gave her the utmost trouble and misery. Minney's marriage meant eventual separation and she dreaded the day. Minney was now a very exquisite and amusing young lady. As marriage seemed inevitable, both Mrs Fitzherbert and the King aimed at a big match. Mrs Fitzherbert brought her out in the best circles and the dowry, which the King had not only promised but paid, was accumulating at interest in the Bank.

Lovers, swains, and admirers Minney had in plenty. George FitzClarence, son of the Duke of Clarence by Dora Jordan, was the most adoring and he loved her through all his sad and broken life. This was a match which both the King and Mrs Fitzherbert disapproved. As Mrs Fitzherbert said: "one of the family is enough!" But Minney herself, much as she pitied him, had no wish to marry him, and Mrs Fitzherbert told him so very clearly.

The Duke of Clarence wrote to his son (August 1, 1819):

"Be prudent and cautious and do not irritate the Regent: I want to know in what manner he interfered respecting Miss Seymour for or against you. I am surprised at the conduct of Mrs Fitzherbert which you do not deserve."<sup>1</sup>

Other proposals were Lord Francis Leveson Gower who became the first Lord Ellesmere, and the Prince

<sup>1</sup> *FitzClarence Papers.*

## Minney meets George Dawson

Jules de Polignac who required a change of religion which was impossible. Minney certainly refused Lord Arthur Hill,<sup>1</sup> son of the Marquess of Downshire, and even Lord Glengall, who had been turned down by one of Lady Conyngham's girls. Her cousin Lord Beauchamp's advances were sufficient to cause her to turn her back on him at dinner, for which she was well scolded by Mrs Fitzherbert. His letters to Minney have survived written from Paris where he was schooling himself in the fine arts and learning to collect the peerless Wallace Collection. The artist was clear in his beautiful script.

After all her past struggles to keep Minney, Mrs Fitzherbert was like an anxious hen and looked upon suitors as so many hawks. In 1819 unfortunately for her peace of mind, her beloved Minney met a young officer George Dawson later Damer, who had had two horses killed under him while serving on the Staff at Waterloo. He had been attached to the military mission in Russia and had followed the appalling scenes of Napoleon's retreat. He was good-looking and romantic. Everything was in his favour except that he was a younger son. He had no title nor property and was rumoured to be in debt and a gambler.

His Waterloo achievements are mentioned in Colonel Grouow's *Reminiscences*: how he was sent by the Duke at the close of the day to order the Union Brigade to advance:

"After a long search he at last came upon all that remained. They were reduced to about 250 men, many of them wounded. At their head stood the gallant Colonel Muter of the Inniskillings. . . . When Damer came up and said: Now gentlemen, you are to advance with the rest of the Army, he said he should never forget the look that Muter cast upon him. They all

<sup>1</sup> Lady Eleanor Butler noted (February 21, 1821) a marriage between Lord Arthur Hill and Miss Seymour as one likely to take place.



## Mrs Fitzherbert

broke into a sort of canter and guided by Damer came upon some French infantry who were still defending themselves. As Muter gave the order to charge, the French fired a volley and hit Damer in the knee who heard Muter grumble out in his Scotch: I think you ha' it nu', sir."

The moment that his honourable intentions towards Minney were breathed, Mrs Fitzherbert was up in arms. The last ambition of a noble mind was a grand marriage for Minney, but George Dawson was neither the Prince charming nor the Duke desirable nor even an appropriate Peer. Minney was forbidden to see George Dawson. At once George followed them to Paris and the agitated correspondence, which passed between Minney and George, reveals a picture of Mrs Fitzherbert's subsequent life. The disapproval of the King and Duke of York were brought into play. The Duke was Commander-in-Chief and could make himself felt in Mr Dawson's prospects. He was inclined to take any course which would relieve dear Mrs Fitzherbert. Accordingly Mr Dawson was sent to St Vincent in the West Indies and Minney was sent with her brother to Germany in the vain hope that they would forget each other. In fact everything was done to make them undyingly romantic lovers. Mrs Fitzherbert, having figured in one of the world's greatest romances, seemed at a certain age to have forgotten entirely what Romance could be. The lovers had no course left but to deceive poor Mrs Fitzherbert who grew more and more flustered and frightened. Fate seemed to have decreed that "George" was to be the fatal name in Mrs. Fitzherbert's life.

In the far distances of time, Minney's youngest daughter (Lady Constance Leslie), wrote a note about her parents' courtship:

"I believe that Mrs Fitzherbert did not like her beloved adopted daughter marrying my father, the



MRS. FITZHERBERT

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## “The Subject”

most handsome and charming of men but a younger son of an Irish Peer. He was sent to the West Indies for some time in hopes of the impression wearing off, but it only deepened on both sides and then it was allowed. George the Fourth was chaffing my mother on having amused herself and encouraged other admirers during this time of parting, and she answered him very wittily: Yes, Sir, that was when I was trying to forget him.”

Meantime, the two lovers had to pass through five difficult years. Everything that could possibly be raked up against Mr Dawson was brought to Mrs Fitzherbert's notice. He was penniless, he was a gambler, he was a drinker, he was in debt, he had loved others! He was made to appear so unsuitable that they were prevented from meeting in every way. The only real deterrent to Minney was Mrs Fitzherbert's great distress.

But love is love, and the whole correspondence between the lovers has been preserved down to the notes and slips which passed between them. There were third parties and confidants everywhere, including Lady Dorothy Eyre, the Bathursts, a mysterious Count and Countess and Maryanne Smythe, another adopted daughter of Mrs Fitzherbert who appeared in her home about this time.

In a manner history was repeating itself. For nearly forty years Mrs Fitzherbert had alluded to her marriage with the King as “*the subject*.” Now Minney's love affair became the subject between them. Mrs Fitzherbert had once fled from her lover abroad. In her turn, Minney was snatched away from her George who took steps to follow. As soon as Minney confided that she was attached to him, he refused to give her up. Minney wrote:

“Your proposal of meeting me abroad would but cause embarrassment to all parties concerned and I

## Mrs Fitzherbert

am quite convinced could never lead to the consequence you anticipate. What *Mama* said with respect to my following you was grounded upon George [Seymour] having repeated to her what you said . . . and he gave her the impression which has been productive of her using an argument against me which annoys me from thinking my brother must be induced to think I am infatuated."

George Dawson followed her to Paris where Maryanne Smythe was their go-between, scribbling to him about Minney:

"Lord A<sup>1</sup> was talking about Fred and himself gambling and he added: My friend George doesn't play, and she answered in a low voice as Mrs Fitzherbert was near: No, doesn't he? . . . She cannot bear the idea that you seem to have seized that she asked such a question. . . . You will certainly see her tomorrow for we must go to Victorine's but today Mrs Fitzherbert went out or rather we three quite late.

"How much I wish that I could do anything to comfort you and if we can go out together at three (which is uncertain) I will go to a shop *en face de votre hôtel*. There is a possibility you must prepare for disappointment, as Mrs Fitzherbert may want the carriage. I heard of the report that the King was dead! I did not see her the whole day. I cannot tell you how I felt it, accustomed as I have been of late never to pass a day without that comfort. What must therefore be your feelings! "

Minney sent him an enclosure:

"You will see by it that your idea was anticipated of the Duke of York being prepared in time to be able to repeat what he had heard. I feel quite sure this plan will succeed. I shall see you this evening but we must not have any more interesting conversation for

<sup>1</sup> Probably Lord Alvanley, a gambling friend of Mr Dawson, but also a great wit, dandy, and *bon viveur*.

## Appeal to Duke of York

fear of retarding the affair, Mrs Fitzherbert being put now in a very good humour. . . . I heard of you this morning by Mary Anne Smythe who told *us* she met you walking and that you *remembered her*."

Lord Alvanley, the wit and dandy, was a friend of George Dawson and offered to get the Duke of York to write to Mrs Fitzherbert by showing the Duke a letter from George. Minney confided to Lady Dorothy Eyre :

"I think a letter so decidedly upon the subject would appear written with the sole idea of being shewn to the Duke of York and strike him so naturally and *Mama* by his communicating it to her. From the circumstances he has detailed to Lord Alvanley it will put it in his power to give him his real opinion. His intimacy with the Duke of York allows him to adopt the plan he thinks best for putting the affair to the Duke in the best point of view. . . . Since this has been written, my dearest Dorothy, I have had a conversation more uncomfortable than I have it in my power to express. She heard I believe from ——— that he had professed his sentiments being returned in a decided manner and since the interview between us she now knows to have taken place has made her so violent and she declares now that if I chuse to plunge at once in the affair, she wishes to give me up but that *nothing* shall ever induce her to have the slightest degree of acquaintance with Mr Dawson, *that* she tells me this beforehand. . . . The Duke of York had written to her that I insisted for her to ask him to let me speak to him before her to expose the subject, for however unfavorable was the occasion, my mind never would be relieved by his conduct being misrepresented and looked upon as dishonourable, when I felt it to be most completely the reverse and she said that my hearing the Duke of York's opinion was the thing she should wish as he might then express the King's sentiments as well as his own."

## Mrs Fitzherbert

The King had decided views. He had no wish to see the nest-egg he had laid up for Minney handed over to a gentleman who was certainly in debt and possibly a gambler. The Duke of York, of course, sympathised with Mrs Fitzherbert's wishes.

Before leaving Paris, George Dawson wrote a full account of the affair to Albanley who passed it on to the Duke of York.<sup>1</sup> He described how Mrs Fitzherbert had reversed her former goodness and friendship :

" When I first met Miss Seymour she seemed as if she wished to avoid me : this and the repulsive manner of Mrs Fitzherbert gave me but little hope and I resolved to stifle every feeling of my heart. . . . One day I had the good fortune to meet her alone and it was upon this occasion that I was made the happiest man in the world. I received the assurance that she was not indifferent to my attachment to her but at the same time she observed to me how insurmountable appeared the difficulties attending on eventual happiness ! . . . she was bound by every event connected with her life to the King and to Mrs Fitzherbert and she could not summon enough courage to propose to them what she knew would meet with their disapprobation ! . . . Miss Seymour from every circumstance connected with herself has a right to look forward to making the most splendid marriage. . . . I know that I am nobody and have nothing. . . . To one of my brothers Lady Caroline Damer made an allowance assuring him that she would provide for him at her death. I have no reason for supposing that she would not do as much for me. . . . And with this must be considered that the Duke of York was so kind as to promise that he would do something for me ! I feel that from the intimate terms upon which he is with Mrs Fitzherbert that nothing would do me so much good in her opinion as H.R.H. being so good as to

<sup>1</sup> Tom Moore mentioned in his *Diaries* (March 24, 1820): " George Dawson is gone off to England to try and make interest with the Duke of York to get the King's consent to his marrying Miss Seymour."

## Minney Writes to Dawson

express to her a desire to serve me, did an occasion for so doing present itself. I am the more anxious on this point from Mrs Fitzherbert having authorised her friends here to say in her own and in Miss Seymour's name that I had behaved very ill to them, that I had repeatedly received from Miss Seymour an opinion of how indifferent I was to her, that I had followed them from here and was constantly putting myself forward and annoying them! I feel conscious that my conduct will bear a more favorable interpretation than this; and that I can depend upon Mrs Fitzherbert's justice to change so bad an opinion of me when she hears what has passed! "

### MINNEY SEYMOUR TO GEORGE DAWSON

(December 1, 1820) "Our correspondence has never been interrupted notwithstanding Mama's strong wish that this should be the case which though she herself did not express decidedly to me was communicated to me from her and the total silence I have pursued upon the subject has hitherto left her in perfect ignorance as to what I have done about it and will, I trust, remain so, as it would only afford an unsatisfactory discussion as by giving her her wish I never could be happy by repaying with such neglect and ingratitude a person whose friendship, devotedness and unselfishness have been exerted to a greater degree than I could have almost supposed any human being capable of and I shall deserve to be detested if I ever think differently.

"There has been since yesterday so sudden a change in Mama's manner towards me or rather in her spirits that I do not know to what cause to attribute it. I cannot suppose it to exist with the ideas her mind has been filled with for the last week, but what can have dissipated them I am at a loss to understand. My either telling her or letting Fred to give her to understand that my ideas upon the subject were decided upon will afford so complete a contradiction to my saying that I neither could or would take such a step without her consent, that it would only lead her



## Mrs Fitzherbert

to say that I was my own mistress, that as she could not answer for such a thing to my family she would at once give me up to them. I am convinced that this determination is fixed and would be acted upon.

"The only thing I feel myself capable of doing is, when she reproaches me with having allowed her to contradict a report, while I was keeping up the cause of it being spread, will be by my reminding her of my having allowed her to say that no engagement existed between us, that she must recollect the feelings I then expressed to be those I had described in all our conversations on the subject. That however these had been stifled. Our meeting accidentally and having had an opportunity of conversing (that had not occurred for a year) put it out of my power to disguise the return his feelings met with. She must give this the credit of the truth it deserves, and she can only speak of it with this view of the subject to the Duke of York or those with whom she has communicated about it, and will then hear their unprejudiced opinion. She must feel that, when she knows his feelings for me not to be unreturned, it is not possible he can give up ideas about me and this must do away with the suspicion she may otherwise form, when we are in London, of our carrying on any sort of communication unknown to her. As for the King being spoken to by any of my brothers, I could hardly venture to wish them to undertake a commission I feel would be so ill-received. It can only be opened upon by any opportunity he may afford me, or should the Duke of York take up the subject in a manner that is not unfavorable."

To some third party Minney scribbled:

"Will you be guarded in not speaking to—Butler on any one of our affairs before I speak to you again not from mistrust towards her but I did not wish *her* to know of our interview of this morning and if she heard it from you she would I think be annoyed by the reserve I had shewn her."

"I am too uncertain about *Mama* going to

## News from Brighton

Albemarle Street to risk seeing you there tomorrow. I will if I can walk in the Gardens as I shall be very anxious to know the result of your interview with George. I go to Lady Sugden's in the evening."

Minney continued in correspondence in spite of Mrs Fitzherbert's deep suspicions and strong disapproval. They wrote letters for each other to a third party, Countess . . . at Wimbledon. The discomfited George received word of all the doings at Brighton and the rivals encircling Minney (January 1821):

"The walking into dinner put us in mind of many things and Wat Smythe said to me: How is he? I like him the best of them all. Lord Arthur Hill acted your part in getting the cloak at night but she would not go into the little room. It put her in mind of so many things. I sent her your first letter in answer to the one I enclosed you from Wimbledon."

"They have been acting a play called 'A Roland for an Oliver.' Minney looked beautiful and acted well. I arrived a day too late and want it repeated but Mrs Fitzherbert wont hear of it. She was so sick of the Rehearsals. We are all going to the Pavilion tonight for the first time since he was *Re*."<sup>1</sup>

(February 16, 1821) "Here we have nothing but gaiety. Lord Normanby, who is acting mad, has made them get up two other farces at Mrs Fitzherbert's. Minney's safety is in the numbers of her admirers. Lord Normanby and Lane Fox amongst the married men; Standish, Lord Arthur [Hill] and Beauchamp of the single. She rather likes the *chase du Renard* herself but there it is because he<sup>2</sup> resembles you in the face. I scold her and say she will forget you in your own image. They are very fond of waltzing together and he acts and sings but he is married so there is no danger. Beauchamp appears in love with her but I think she will *cousin* him. They repeated 'Roland for an Oliver' and Minney's part was very

<sup>1</sup> King George IV.

<sup>2</sup> Mr Lane Fox of Bramham, Yorks.

## Mrs Fitzherbert

apropos. Pray read it. She says he wrote her letter after letter. She returned them in a blank cover and then she resolves never to think of him and she thinks of nothing else. She did it very well."

(February 19) "I showed your letter to Minney last night as Mr and Mrs Smythe dined with me without Mrs Fitzherbert."

MINNEY SEYMOUR TO GEORGE DAWSON

(December 28, 1821) Brighton.

"I cannot tell you the relief your letter afforded me. I was made so thoroughly uncomfortable by the first I received from you. You are so well aware of the strong manner in which you expressed yourself about Mama,<sup>1</sup> that I did away with all the anger I was inclined to feel and it has only left me the annoyance of knowing how much blame is attached to myself from having by my manner of describing her general conduct led you to judge of her in so severe a manner as you did in your first letter. I found her rather better and she has been in much better humour than I have thought her for some time. I cannot make out one thing, which is an anxiety she has shewn she never before did of the King and myself having greater communication with another. She told me that the coldness which he has lately shewn me must originate from his having those about him who misrepresent me to him. I answered that to everyone I had spoken to about the King I had always expressed myself in the same language about him, which was that of gratitude and affection. She then said it might not be personal, the ideas he had about me, but disapprobation of some part of my conduct which was the cause. I begged her, if she surmised what it was, to tell me, as I might from knowing my offence offer any explanation that could be required but I cannot get a step further and there appears a degree of *empressement* on the part of the Royal Go-between, the Apothecary,<sup>2</sup> to speak to

<sup>1</sup> "Mama" throughout these letters is Mrs. Fitzherbert.

<sup>2</sup> Sir Henry Hallford.

## A Mystery Feared

Mama greater than ever I saw it. I cannot help thinking that it is some suspicion he has about you and myself that is the cause of this.

"Mama spoke to the Count yesterday and told him that owing to your still remaining in England she could not help feeling that from different things she put together there was a degree of mystery between you and myself: that I had never spoken to her upon the subject and that she was made very uncomfortable at the reserve and want of confidence I showed her and asked him what he knew about it. He then told her of the meeting at Cray which she heard of evidently for the first time and desired the Count without telling me she had spoken to him to advise my mentioning the interview I had had with you. He told her that he knew I had deferred doing so till you went abroad, which he supposed your different arrangements had made you put off. He told me she had rather hinted at the King's coldness to me originating from something connected with all this. . . . The Count desires me also to say that should you think it worth your while to come down to Brighton one evening which you could spend together, to let him know. He does not wish the Countess to know it still less Mama, as she will be inclined to think it some plot against her, but he thinks it possible that from the conversation he has had with her he has so far collected her real opinion. He told me she was very much agitated in speaking to him and I saw she had been crying when I saw her afterwards. . . . The San Antonios<sup>1</sup> are asked to the Pavilion tonight. I am not, but I conclude it to be from not supposing that at a large party I should not wish to go. However I wish I may soon see the King. I have only been out once since I have been here and that to Church on Christmas Day, when I met Lady Conyngham and family, who overpowered me with affection. I began to think she must be getting out of favour, but I believe this is not at all

<sup>1</sup> Count de San Antonio, described as a handsome ladykiller, who married an heiress, Miss Johnson.

## Mrs Fitzherbert

the case. . . . Mama's good humour towards me has not lessened since the Count told her of Cray, which I think will make it less difficult for me to speak to her. I did not tell the Count that I had heard from you since I have been here nor that I had seen you at Miss Bathurst's. . . ."

"Mama's good humour has continued with me. The only *démêlé* I have had with her was about two days ago, when Beauchamp<sup>1</sup> arrived here, as he said, for some length of time to enjoy our society, but of course did the reverse and in two days set off for Paris, saying he did not find his society wished for and enquired from Mama if it was customary for a person to turn their back to another in the way I had mine at dinner to him and addressed all my conversation to my other neighbour: and that, as I had never answered or listened to one remark he had made me, he would trouble me with no other. He then turned round and asked my commands to Calais and Paris. This Mama did not hear, but the former part of the conversation she repeated to me and added some other things he had said to her, enquiring from me the reason of my extraordinary conduct and telling me that she should in future avoid inviting to her house a person I had insulted by the incivility of my manner: that if it had been my object to put an end to being on terms even of friendship with Beauchamp I must have completely succeeded. I repeat all this, however, from seeing the impression upon her mind was that my conduct had been guided by my feelings on the other subject, as she had certainly exaggerated to herself the coolness I shewed to Beauchamp and I do not regret the ill-humour she shewed me, as I think it proceeded from the ideas I wish her to have. She has at no other time given me any opportunity of renewing the subject to her, indeed we have never been alone for several weeks.

"I think People are quite mistaken in thinking that the King's coldness to me was encouraged by Mama,

<sup>1</sup> Afterwards fourth Marquess of Hertford.

## Duke of York Anxious

as I am sure she is herself annoyed by it and was very anxious for me to write, which I was prevented doing by an invitation to the Pavilion the very day my letter was to have gone. But she still wishes me to write when the King leaves Brighton altogether."

GEORGE DAWSON TO MINNEY SEYMOUR

"I think that it is advisable that I should write to you, sending long letters to you openly! stating the distress of my own situation and the regard I felt I owed to you and Mrs Fitzherbert: how sensible I was that my success annoyed Mrs Fitzherbert herself. . . . I would recommend your enclosing my letter in one of your own to Mrs Fitzherbert, which letter to contain a declaration of your sentiments for me, this letter to be couched in terms of the greatest affection, regard and consideration for Mrs Fitzherbert's feelings as mine to you shall be! I would conclude it desiring to have a written answer to it . . . the irritation and constant anxiety in Mrs Fitzherbert will be replaced by the necessity of making up her mind to your determination and when once the struggle is over between her vanity and ambition and her affection for you, all will be smooth. . . . This step once taken I think the most desirable thing to be done will be for me to return to England that Mrs Fitzherbert may no longer be annoyed by my presence and to give her time to be calmed and for me then to see what Lady Caroline and the Duke will do for me. I heard from a very sensible person yesterday that the Duke of York is very anxious about our affair! It is certain that the Duchess is and it may be well, to get him to interfere a little with Mrs Fitzherbert if possible.

"I have read and considered over and over again the letter which you have written: the *sang froid* of which is only equalled by the frankness of its language! You have given the finishing blow. . . . I must abandon myself to my destiny and you, who it appears possess the most strength of character, will perhaps one day under take to be my guide.

## Mrs Fitzherbert

"Neither Mrs Fitzherbert nor her society look upon me with a very gracious eye but the means they adopt to hurt me in your estimation cannot be called the most noble. . . .

"... Why then will Mrs Fitzherbert lend so ready an ear to those who seek every opportunity to mistake not only the present but the past occurrences of my life and to blacken my reputation! Can she be so changed in her opinion of one for whom she interested herself so warmly but a year ago and who, come what may, must ever feel grateful to her for it?"

MINNEY SEYMOUR TO GEORGE DAWSON

(June 30, 1822) "I had a note in my hand at Lady Salisbury's when I went in hopes of meeting you to assure that you should receive no letter from me of the description you anticipate. You are indeed mistaken in thinking any appeal to Mrs Fitzherbert's feelings will produce more effect at the present moment than at any other. I wish, if my brother should write to ask to see you, for you not to tell him you have received any information from me, but only speak to him of things up to the time of that letter I told him and Mrs Fitzherbert of having received from you, which included everything, and Mrs Fitzherbert, since she saw you at Almacks, has seen we have no opportunity of conversing. . . . I shall not from my uncle's death be able for some days to go in the world but I shall dine, with Lady Clanrickarde tomorrow evening, and will stop at Bramah's in Piccadilly about half past one to give me the opportunity of speaking to you. You avoided it so completely in Kensington Gardens. I hardly know what to suppose but that you were more hurt with my conduct than I had felt to deserve. . . . I had last night a note for you which I preferred giving to sending, as I did not wish Mrs Fitzherbert should know of my having written to you since I last told her of having done so, as I know she becomes more irritated if she thinks I have done so without telling her of it.

## Minney Remains Firm

"I felt that if a moment was more calculated than another for speaking to Mrs Fitzherbert seriously upon a subject that had long been dropped (though never dismissed from our minds) it was one when we were separated and she could hear with more coolness of the communication that had been carried on between us, of which I told her as much as I could without committing any third person. It was received with less irritation than upon former occasions but with equal determination. She at once told me, if I was resolved upon it, I must separate from her with as little *éclat* as possible, as it should only be from my own family that I should take such a step, and she went even so far as to say she would give up coming to London and make her health the plea for remaining at Brighton. This was in addition to all she said before upon the subject and she repeated it in conversation to the Count who left Brighton the day after. . . .

"... I had written so far to you and Mrs Fitzherbert was gone out. I had a note from her which has produced a conversation since her return. I give you the copy of her note and in telling you what has passed I feel I have suffered more than at any one previous conversation. You will see she desired me to answer it in writing but it was written in too general terms for me to have done this. I left no argument untried either in expressing my attachment to you, my willingness to accompany you to the West Indies or the hopelessness she must feel of my ever realising any of those prospects she once formed for me.

"She answers this by what you have known her to have said before and, though very much agitated, answered with a determination that nobody could see without believing it. She told me she had no alternative but that of seeing me give up what I imagined would make me happy and now seeing me made miserable by this sacrifice to her wishes and my taking a step which would make the rest of her life wretched: that nothing could alter the resolution of having no intercourse with you: that after the blow I should at



## Mrs Fitzherbert

once give to her by marrying you she never could or would again shew herself in the world and that by immediately leaving London she should leave me with my family, whose disapprobation to such a step I might know but of which I should feel less the influence than of hers in every way. . . . I shall set off in life with the bitter feeling of giving Mrs Fitzherbert what she considers the greatest blow and being considered by the greatest proportion of those who know me in having repaid Mrs Fitzherbert's kindness to me by an act she most disapproved. . . . I am more determined than I was before upon going to Dresden. We are indeed much better separated when things are come to what they are now. . . . It is seven in the morning. I am still writing. . . ."

GEORGE DAWSON TO MINNEY SEYMOUR

(August 6, 1822)

"I believe I told you that I meant to propose myself to make a visit to Lady Caroline Damer in Dorsetshire. . . . In Dorsetshire she has two properties Milton Abbey and a smaller one near Weymouth (Came). Milton Abbey a very fine place with the remains of the Abbey and Chapel adjoining the House. She is an odd person with some prejudices. She did not tell Henry she had left him this but repeated several times that she had not given it to Lord Portarlington. She then told him that she had left the house in town (Dorchester House) to the Duke of Dorset who is a distant relative by her mother's side. . . . How strange are the causes which move some people. Henry told me that she is always abusing the Duke of Dorset and he attributes her present intentions solely to his being made Master of the Horse. She is one of those persons who are always talking of the dear King, the dear Princess, the dear Duke of York, and she wrote to Lord Bathurst that what she wished for me particularly was to be put about the dear King. Portarlington means to change our name to Damer. I don't think that signifies much though there are too

## The King Embarks

many grocers and butchers that bear the present one. The village near my brother's place in Ireland is inhabited by Dawsons who all swear they are related. God only knows! Perhaps they may! . . .

"Henry, who is a very prudent close gentleman and sees more of Lady Caroline than any of us, told me yesterday that she lately said to him: George thinks that I have quarrelled with him because I will not assist him but now I hope he does not think I mean to pass him over! It gives me pleasure, my dearest friend, to dwell on whatever holds out a chance of hastening our happiness or increasing our comfort if married. Did you ever hear of the prejudices about you? How singular that these two old ladies should hold the same opinion of us! I wish to God someone would tell Mrs Fitzherbert this. There is this difference though that one hour's acquaintance with you would make Lady Caroline change all her opinions and I am afraid I cannot hope to be so fortunate *au près de Madame Fitzherbert*. . . .

"On Saturday Ladies Glengall, Stewart, E. Montague and myself went to see the King embark at Greenwich where we dined. I never saw the King looking so well. He was dressed in blue which becomes him. It is a singular coincidence that on his arriving in Scotland he will be informed of an important political death. Old Lord St Vincent, 89 years of age, received him on board his yacht! . . . The papers give long accounts of Mrs Fitzherbert's dinner parties. Can this be? Alfred D'Orsay is *bon enfant* but really, if a Frenchman of real good company was to come to London, he would I am sure say that the most singular thing he remarked was the way in which an unlicked, unbred captious dog is spoiled and allowed to dictate in Society. . . . After writing last night I went to Lady Glengall's where I heard the lamentable details of Lord Londonderry's death. Saw the King on Friday. The King remarked that his mind appeared deranged and he seemed to be labouring under some delusion. The King sent to Coombe

## Mrs Fitzherbert

for Lord Liverpool and communicated his suspicions and expressed his apprehension that, when so strong a mind was once affected, it was to be feared it would never recover the attack. He was cupped on Friday night. On Sunday Clanronald saw him and Lady Caroline, who was in Kensington Gardens, saw that the family were very uneasy about him. . . . Too intense occupation as in the case of Pitt, Fox, Whitbread and Romilly had destroyed the vigour of his mind. . . . I passed through St James Square yesterday evening about 8 o'clock. There were a good number of persons of the Lower Classes assembled round the house and I am told that they loudly heaped every sort of imprecation upon him. *Les bêtes* already say that his death was owing to O'Meara's<sup>1</sup> book. He was on the point of commencing a prosecution of it. So Lowe<sup>1</sup> informed me this morning."

Lady Louisa Dawson wrote to her brother from Worthing (April 4, 1822):

"Mrs Fitzherbert and Miss Seymour and a large party came over here one day. They walked by our House and stared up at the house, particularly the Mama. She must have known we were here as there was nobody else at that time."

Mrs Fitzherbert refused even to discuss the subject. However, she offered to withdraw to Brighton for ever, leaving Minney to settle with her family whether to marry Mr Dawson or not. But Minney could not bear to throw over her loving Mama to loneliness and misery. She agreed to go abroad with her brother George Seymour to visit her sister Horatia, married to Mr Morier, the British Minister in Dresden.

The chief interest of the letters which passed from Minney to her lover was the reaction they showed of Mrs Fitzherbert's anxieties. In fact we know little of her life in the Twenties except as reflected in her letters to Minney or in Minney's to George Dawson.

<sup>1</sup> O'Meara was Napoleon's doctor and Sir Hudson Lowe his jailor at St Helena.

## Minney Reaches Brussels

In the autumn of 1822, Minney reached Brussels in strict chaperonage. She left an obedient letter concerning herself which the Duke of York gave to the King. The King was delighted, especially as it dispelled rumours which had been reaching him, thanks to Lady Conyngham, who was anxious he should take more notice of her own less lovely daughters, who were now on the marriage market. Mrs Fitzherbert wrote (July 29, 1822) from Sherwood Lodge:

"I am very glad you wrote. I think it will make the Marchioness very angry and I trust it will convince the King that the stories told him respecting you were only her own fabrications."

Mrs Fitzherbert wrote Minney long weekly letters from Cheltenham until she could join her in Paris, where both of them spent the winter.

Before leaving England, Minney wrote from Sherwood Lodge to George:

"I think *Mama* more inclined to join me at Paris than she even was two days ago and I should think it would be almost the moment of your departure for the West Indies. She has always dwelt so much upon the misery she went through when last abroad by your having followed us to Paris that I am sure a renewal of it would make her more irritated than ever. . . . We have passed the evening *tête-à-tête* and nothing but the most indifferent subjects have been touched on, besides her wishing that, to deprive the King of saying I neglected him, I should write him a letter *d'adieux*. This I accordingly accomplished and I think it is better I should have done so. We go to town on Tuesday but as *Mama* returns here to dinner and leaves me to dine at my brother's I do not know at the last moment I shall be able to leave her or go out in the evening without her."

## Mrs Fitzherbert

MINNEY SEYMOUR TO GEORGE DAWSON

(August 20, 1822) Dresden

"Our first days journey was merely to Aix-la-Chapelle, where the Duke of Devonshire tried to make us remain for a Ball he was to give there the next day, but my *dansomanie* did not prevail nor were we anxious to be deprived of post horses the whole way up the Rhine . . . our courier had served in the French Army as orderly to young Kellermann and was in consequence very intelligent in pointing out to us the situations where the principal events and actions had taken place. I confined myself inquiries principally to the proceedings of the Russian Army. I leave you to discover for what reason. . . .

"I have had two letters from Mrs Fitzherbert full of regrets at my absence, for which however I find she consoles herself by never having been alone for two days, which she tells me has been her case. . . . I am very glad you offered Lady Caroline Damer to pay her a visit, which, though she declined, she appears to have done so in an agreeable manner. What she has announced to be her intentions in regard to your elder brother must be a great relief to his mind. . . . You say you may be related probably to those of your name about your brother's place, so I am probably living in the house with one of your Cousins as the *maitre d'hôtel* has the same appellation as yourself and being the only English servant in the establishment I am always obliged to send for Mr Dawson! . . . The Duke and Duchess of Cumberland have written to propose paying us a visit of some days and upon leaving us to go to Pillnitz leaving the little Prince and Princess de Salmes to my sister's charge. . . .

"The servants have all applied for permission to go out to attend an Execution, which is under such peculiar circumstances I must give it a place in my letter, however little suitable the mention of it must appear. The woman, who is to be executed, went to attend an execution about three months ago and was seized with the idea of the mode of its taking place

## Letter from Dresden

(which here is the head being struck off with a sword) being the most desirable kind of death: that to attain it she went home, murdered her husband with whom she has always lived upon good terms and immediately proceeded to give herself up to the Police."

(August 21, 1822) Dresden

"I believe I told you I had by Mrs Fitzherbert's recommendation written to the King to take leave of him and to tell him I was coming here. The Duke of York told Mrs Fitzherbert he was very much pleased at my having shewn him this attention and that he should not merely answer my letter. This however he has not done. I suppose the journey to Scotland has put it out of his head or some occurrence. . . . I believe the rancune I had towards Lady Emily Fitzgerald originated in her giving up Lady Dorothy's name to Madame de Flahault as the person who had been the medium of communication between us and not from knowing she had blamed the want of character I had shewn. . . . We have had some English people to dinner for the first time. Among them was Walter Scott's son. He appears the most pompous I ever saw. It was thought right to pay some compliment to him while he was remaining in Berlin upon his father's works and he was consulted about some costume described in Kenilworth when he contented himself with answering he had not had time to read all his father had found time to write. He dined at Court, where the King from his having resided sometime in Germany imagined he could understand the language. This not succeeding he tried French with no happier result and from the difficulty shewed in understanding my one remark we suspect he does not know English. Germans have so great an admiration of Walter Scott's novels, which even to the Fortunes of Nigel they have translated, that they have really received a serious shock to their enthusiasm from the son appearing so entirely indifferent.

"I have not heard from Mrs Fitzherbert whether I shall find her at Paris. The letters I have since had

## Mrs Fitzherbert

from her have not touched upon the subject, but from the letters I wrote to her about it I think the probability is that she may determine upon coming. I feel a great indifference as to where my winter will be passed, though I confess I have some distaste of Brighton, now the King treats me with coldness after he has shewn me so much kindness. There is something so painful in one succeeding the other, whether undeservedly or not. My sister brought me in your last letter laughing and telling me she fancied it was from you and that Miss Bathurst would give you credit for a very continued political correspondence with Morier . . . which she says will now only make matters worse when they can only mend by allowing time by your absence for Mrs Fitzherbert's mind to become calmed upon the subject."

### Dresden

"We had yesterday from laziness and the heat of the day refused attending a *Chasse* which takes place annually, where the Queen of Saxony is supposed to distinguish herself as an able shot *en tirant sur les cerfs*. I never heard of a more inhuman proceeding. All the unfortunate animals were driven into a field surrounded by strong network and from a platform they were fired upon by the Queen and the rest of the Royal Family, some of them repeatedly wounded before they were put an end to. . . . It is certainly very absurd that there should be such a degree of coincidence between Lady Caroline Damer and Mrs Fitzherbert's opinions respecting us. I do not think Mrs Fitzherbert being aware of it would be but productive of her using it as one argument she might add to her others upon the subject. I cannot flatter myself that what you are kind enough to suppose would remove Lady Caroline's prejudices about me."

### Berlin (October 1822)

"Nothing is said to exceed the general dullness of Berlin. It is only during this time that it is occupied by 15,000 troops that the town looks even inhabited.

## Berlin Society

What pleased me the most was the Queen of Prussia's monument at Charlottenburg which I thought perfectly beautiful. It consists of only one figure, that of the Queen in the attitude of sleep. It was sculptured by a man, who had been her servant and in whom she had discovered so much taste for the art, she had sent him to Florence to take lessons at her expense, and it was remarkable that his first work should have been a tribute to her memory.

"We went one evening to a *soirée* where we met most of the society of Berlin and where the lady of the house thought proper to present every one person to me and I could not help remarking afterwards upon her carrying about a large picture which she was showing everybody and appearing to draw their attention upon me. I could not account for this till I was told someone had spread the unaccountably ridiculous report of my being the King of England's daughter and to improve the idea a Print of Princess Charlotte had been carried about to prove the likeness that was said to exist between us. I could not help laughing when all this was told me, though George for the honour of the family was inclined to take it *au sérieux* and take the first opportunity of snubbing the principal propagators of the idea. . . ."

(October, 1822)

"I have for some days been more thoroughly annoyed than I can express to you in consequence of a letter I have received from Mrs Fitzherbert. I had had several from her touching only upon general subjects and not in the most distant manner referring to what was connected with us, and I cannot account for the particular motive that has at once made her write to me upon it in the most detached and decided terms. The greatest part of it is but a repetition of all you know her to have said a thousand times. She then expresses the impossibility of our continuing to live together upon the terms we have so long done, that her meeting me at Paris must be decided by our coming to a proper understanding upon the subject,



## Mrs Fitzherbert

as she never could consent to passing a time there which could be subject to the repetition of what occurred there during our last *sejour* nor could she allow the entire comfort of her life to be interrupted in the manner my conduct caused it to be: that though I should receive no support from my own family in persevering in the line of conduct I had so long pursued with regard to you, I must decidedly tell her so, as her plans could be guided by it, as if I determined upon inflicting upon her such a blow she never could recover: she should in giving up whatever had been her pursuits and habits

“ ‘remain with those few friends whose kindness and attention will enable me to struggle through the heart-rending misery you have caused me to suffer ’

“—that I bestowed encouragement upon you at the very moment I professed my unwillingness to take a step disapproved and that, though not present, a correspondence was to be carried on to the same effect amounted to the same point, in short nothing could be more painful to me than the contents of the whole letter, which she desired me to answer by the first post that she may judge of what footing we are to be upon. The résumé of the whole letter, though written in affectionate language, appears to me to call at once to decide upon leaving her and living with my family or rather upon deciding to give you or her up for ever.

“ I answered her letter by telling her I had hoped she could have remained satisfied with what I expressed in the last conversation I had held with her before George on the subject in which I said I would never marry under circumstances when she declared it to be a blow she never could recover . . . that unless your intention of going to the West Indies in October had altered since I left England, she would not fear the occurrence of what took place during our last winter at Paris: that however I did not offer this as a security as, should we be thrown more immediately into each other society by any alteration in your plans, I should feel equally bound to show consistence with

## Letter from Minney

regard to what I had expressed to her, which to use her own words:

"I would not agree with encouraging you deceiving me and though at present a correspondence is to be carried on to the same effect but that from all general circumstances you were not like to change your intention of going to St Vincent's, that as to spending the winter at Paris it was a perfectly secondary consideration and that I did not on any account wish her to meet me there, when she might prefer spending the winter at Brighton but that I hoped she would immediately let me know what she decided. . . . It of course precluded conversations with my brother to whom I showed both the letters. He had had one by the same post, which for some time he avoided showing me, which I found upon reading at last was not only owing to it containing almost all she had expressed to me but with the addition of telling him that she knew from certain authority you said, since I left England, that you would not have persevered had it not been for the great degree of encouragement you had met with from me. Her own pride for me was wounded by your making a declaration so humiliating to me. In giving you an exact and detailed account of what has been expressed by Mrs Fitzherbert and myself upon the subject, do not allow yourself to think I have acted with weakness and want of character and conformed to her wishes with disregard to your feelings. Put yourself in my situation, my dear friend, in getting the letter I did, and then tell me how I could have acted differently? . . . I do not believe that she knows of our actual correspondences. I do not know whether she is likely to show the Duke of York my letter, but if she does, it must do away with what you heard of his having expressed with regard to imagining my conduct was not influenced by her feelings and wished upon the subject and in every respect I wish she may, as my letter will at once show the real state of affairs."

In her distress Mrs Fitzherbert had written a

## Mrs Fitzherbert

pathetic letter to Minney to which she demanded an answer in writing :

"The constant state of anxiety I am perpetually kept in with respect to your proceedings and the little satisfaction I experience when occasionally you make partial communications to me has determined me to address you by letter.

"You must be well aware of the misery we both have suffered for the last three or four years on a subject most painful to me and to all those who are attached and interested about you. It has quite destroyed the entire comfort and happiness of both our lives. It has so completely destroyed mine that neither my health and spirits can bear it any longer. What am I to think of the inconsistency of your conduct when scarcely three weeks ago you voluntarily declared to me that *this sad* affair was quite at an end and in less than a week afterward the whole business was begun over again. The purport of my writing to you is to implore you to come to a final resolution upon this business. You must decide and that decision must be done immediately, that I may know what I have to pursue. I beg your answer may be a written one to avoid all unpleasant conversation upon a subject so heart-rending to one whose whole life has been dedicated to you and whose affection to you none can surpass."<sup>1</sup>

GEORGE DAWSON TO MINNEY SEYMOUR

(October 14, 1822) "I will content myself with observing that this was the most impolitic, weak and ridiculous act she could have been guilty of. It was tyrannical and foolish and the only result she could possibly have expected from it, had she considered, would have been the giving you the further proof of the return you meet with for sacrificing your feelings under the circumstances of the moment to selfish pique and the implacability of a mind entirely swayed by the

<sup>1</sup> *Fitzherbert Papers*, III. Wilkins published this letter in facsimile as one addressed to the Prince!



MRS FITZHERBERT  
From the painting by Cosway.



## Warning from Alvanley

feelings of revenge as well as the most petty, vulgar and illiberal sentiments. I cannot think that I am hasty or unjust in using these strong terms though your amiable feelings will make you reckon them harsh. But what has she to retort by way of argument in answer to the fact of our attachment of four years standing to tell you. . . . This is the *fond* of the affair with the additional alarm that the facts should be known to a world, which she fears, and it is the sentiment alone which induces Mrs Fitzherbert either to invent or to listen to half-explained gossiping stories about my bragging of your partiality for me. In answer to this I have only to say that formerly when irritated against you, I have no doubt that I have said what she imputes to me but most certainly not since you left England have I uttered a syllable that could be thus construed. . . . To give you a further proof I will mention a circumstance that occurred two months ago. The Duke of York passed Sir Derek<sup>1</sup> at Brighton. Alvanley having gone down with him came to Town for a day. I proposed returning with him when he said: You had better not. I am not sure you will be *bien venu*. I had a long conversation with Cooke<sup>2</sup> the other day about you. He said that ' the Duke was very much irritated against you, had said that you had behaved very ill to Miss Seymour and Mrs Fitzherbert, that you had told stories and had bragged of circumstances which had never taken place and that he, the Duke of York, had had an interview with Miss Seymour before she set out, that she had confirmed all this to him, had assured him of her perfect indifference for you, etc.'

" Alvanley replied that he did not believe one word of it upon which Cooke offered to bet him fifty guineas that it was true and further that we should never be married. Cooke is a cautious man about money, however mischievous he may be from being a gossiping

<sup>1</sup> Sir Derek Keppel.

<sup>2</sup> " Kangaroo Cooke " was a dandy and A.D.C. to the Duke of York. He was an uncle to the Lord Cardigan who led the charge at Balaklava.

## Mrs Fitzherbert

and fawning toady and you may therefore judge what Mrs Fitzherbert must have told the Duke ! ”

(November 2, 1822)

“ Why will Mrs Fitzherbert not let you alone? She has separated us. Why does she not adore you for sacrificing your feelings to her after so long a trial of them? I am out of all patience with her and would forgive her her injuries to me, if she would but repay by kindness and forbearance your proof of affection and gratitude to her. I am away. What can happen at all events till I return? . . . By painting her in such amiable colours you have interested me about your distress for herself. You have entrusted her with our secret. She is a Woman and however she may regret your being attached to anyone so unworthy as myself she will be on the side of affection. . . . What do you think of Gurwood going to my brother, who is at Paris, and saying that he knew that our friendship was at an end and you no longer cared for me and Cooke wrote to Paris to say that we were to be married as soon as I returned from the West Indies. . . . There is nothing so abject as a fawning flatterer who will sacrifice any old friend to furnish matter for gossip for their Protectors. Gurwood I have no doubt writes in the same manner to his idol Beauchamp. . . . Alvanley is certainly a silent man but what one has committed more errors of judgment? Goodnight, my dearest love. The officers of a Frigate just paid off are dining in the next room and are beginning to get drunk and noisy and I shall go to bed. . . .

“ At this moment, when all my thoughts and ideas are of the most serious nature, I feel that if I am not doomed to return, the only injuries I have received which I shall not be able to forgive or to lose sight of the bitterness of them, will be that Mrs Fitzherbert has been guilty of to me. For her sake I hope that God will be more merciful to her than I know she deserves and, if my life is sacrificed, may she not feel the pangs of Conscience at her latter end, which she richly

## Visit to Paris

deserves for having caused and prolonged my misery."

Thus George passed to the West Indies while Mrs Fitzherbert joined Minney in Paris.

MINNEY SEYMOUR TO GEORGE DAWSON

Paris (October 25, 1822)

"I was received very affectionately by Mrs Fitzherbert, who has never opened upon the subject relating to you. I have promised George to mention to her having received your letter as she complains to him of my coolness in manner and want of confidence in her. She is so excessively low that I believe *cela m'a gagné* and I see everything *en noir*. . . . It is much too bad what Lord Alvanley told you of Mr Cooke having had from the Duke. One has been taught unfortunately to admit for exaggeration, but it amounts to more than this when it is said I expressed sentiments to the Duke in an interview which was never known to take place between us. I do not think you have at all reason in thinking yourself to blame in being the cause of my getting the letters I did through having applied to the Duke and expressed an intention of coming to Paris. I believe from what I see now it would have been just the same. . . ."

Paris (November 16, 1822)

". . . I have never begun upon the subject to Mama but contented myself with desiring my brother to tell her I heard from you before you sailed and that I was ready to speak upon the subject, if she would afford me any opening to it, but this she has never done in the slightest degree. Her manner to me is as kind as formerly, but I have thought her a good deal out of spirits. I found by a letter from Mrs Wat that she had to them announced her resolution of not returning to England at least not to London in the Spring, which till then I was not aware of, but she had since announced this determination to George and that, as I might object to this arrangement, she gave me pre-



## Mrs Fitzherbert

vicious notice of it for the purpose of my taking my choice of remaining at Paris or returning to England with him and Georgiana. . . .

"At Stuttgart there was nothing worth remaining for, but the old Queen of Wurtemberg<sup>1</sup> hearing from the Minister of our arrival despatched a messenger from Ludesburg, the Palace she lives in, about three leagues from Stuttgart, to desire we would go over to dine with her the following day which we accordingly did. I never had seen the old lady before, but was not reminded of this being our first acquaintance from any reserve in her manner. I was rather amused by finding my *nom de guerre* familiar with her and hearing myself addressed as 'Minney' by a person who had never seen me and who had left England thirty years before, eleven of which she told me she had passed without receiving a single letter from her own family and Bonaparte had afforded her the first opportunity of transmitting one to the old King during the War. She kept me a long time in her Cabinet, asking me all sort of questions about the King, though she appeared to be as much *au courant* of London gossip as I could have possibly made her. In looks she is the very counterpart of the King but rather a more active individual as she gets up at five the whole year round and is incessantly employed in painting, reading and educating two very nice pretty daughters of that *vaurien* Prince Paul's, who live entirely with her. . . .

"Count Orloff committed a dreadful *gaffe* the other day with Lady Downshire, who happening to tell him we had arrived at Paris, he asked her if I had not lately refused *un* Lord Arthur Hill, who had for some years been *à mes pieds* and it was not till she changed countenance he recollected he was speaking of her son. In point of Society it is very much the same English. The Worcesters still live in Lord Alvanley's apartments. She is making me go with her either to the Spectacles or to come to sit with her, and Mrs Fitz-

<sup>1</sup> Princess Royal of England and sister of George IV.

## The King's Health

herbert is so much against my being seen too much with her to which I in great measure accord. Lady O—— is under strict *surveillance* by the police from her name having been found mentioned in Bowring's papers. What a misfortune this woman is to her children! who from their talents and beauty have excited so much interest. . . . Madame de Chavigny, Beauchamp's sister, died a few days ago. His mother had sent off an express for him to come to her. He wrote to Major Gurwood the day you left London to announce your having done so. It is very odd how in many instances he has afforded me intelligence respecting you, for this letter arrived before yours from Portsmouth. This was mentioned in general conversation, for Major Gurwood has never mentioned your name to me. Lady Grantham did in asking me the first day I saw her here whether it was true I was under a promise of marrying upon your return from the West Indies. . . .

"I hear very bad accounts of the King's health. He is said to have been more haunted by the Blue Devils than I could have supposed when I imagined myself to have been surrounded by the entire set. He is said to have the gout but I fear this is not really the case and that it is his mind that is affected. I have lately known of so many little things instances that corroborate the idea. . . . I am driven out of the room with the smoke and I am writing with Mama talking to me in so good-humoured a manner I feel I am guilty of an act of treachery in employing myself as I am at this moment."

Paris (March 3, 1823) " . . . I believe you made me promise to give you a list of *pêches d'habitude* I was likely to commit here. They would have contented themselves by occasionally raising the report about Beauchamp and myself, which ceasing upon his and Major Gurwood's departure from Paris has been followed by the discovery of a *passion malheureuse* entertained for me by Prince Jules de Polignac which has wanted a foundation beyond that of our being the

## Mrs Fitzherbert

most distant acquaintances. I must certainly acknowledge to having heard of its being observed that I have changed countenance in the company of another individual, whose connection and likeness with you may enable you perhaps to discover his name. . . . I am at this moment causing to be employed 500 agents of the Police in consequence of my *ecrin* having been robbed of everything but my few last diamonds. Fifteen of my best bracelets are gone and among them your beautiful blue one and the King's picture. I have almost been amused at how much *au tragique* French people take things of this sort for I have received as many compliments and visits *de condolence*. . . ."

There was a chance of a big match in France at one time. Lady Gwydir wrote to C. K. Sharpe (April 9, 1823):

"Miss Seymour, I begin to hope, will not marry Prince Jules de Polignac, though it looked like it at one time. Mrs Fitzherbert was in great danger: gout in the stomach. Miss Seymour has not recovered her trinkets, including the King's picture, notwithstanding the reward she offered."

J. W. Gullifer wrote to Thomas Fitzherbert junior (August 1, 1823):

"It is thought the King will not this year resume his naval excursions. The Royal Squadron is moored at Cowes but no prospect is held out of His Majesty repairing thither for that purpose. He is held at Council today to receive Mons. de Polignac, who delivers his credentials from His Most Christian Majesty. There is no doubt of Mons de Polignac having offered marriage to Miss Seymour but it was done *sub rosa* and with all due finesse and diplomatic tact so that *son amour propre n'est pas blessé*, *Monsieur* and the mortification of a refusal to a proposal only informally made has been spared to His Excellency. The impudence and the selfishness of these Frenchmen is really intolerable."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Swynnerton Papers*.

## The Name of Dawson

Lady Jerningham recorded (December 13, 1823):

"Report also says that M. de Polignac proposed with some appearance of success to Miss Seymour but owned he could not ally himself except there was a prospect of a religious contract. This she would not come into. *En attendant* she goes today to Brighton with Mrs Fitzherbert, and the King went there two days ago."<sup>1</sup>

The case against George Dawson was that he was not a Duke nor heir to a fortune and that the name of Dawson appeared plebeian. In Ireland it was connected with at least two Peerages. Lady Caroline Damer then appeared like the fairy godmother behind the scenes.

George Dawson had wisely told her all his case and she wrote bidding him defy Mrs Fitzherbert (May 17, 1821):

"For my sake, therefore as well as your own, I wish you to leave Paris and come to London immediately. Your Sisters wish it. Your friends wish it and most of all your . . . wishes it. I think your coming would do good at present. Your enemies and rivals are busy spreading reports that you are too happy at Paris with the Duchess de Castris and your coming here would give the lie to them all and give you an opportunity of judging for yourself of the feelings of her you are interested in. My belief is that she feels inwardly as you and I wish her to feel and the contrary of what Mrs Fitzherbert wishes but I think you ought to come now and rejoice her heart and refresh her memory with the sight of you. I pointed out your sister Lady Louisa to her the other night at Lady Wortley's and she thanked me much for it and thought her like you. I am going to have a nice Party for the week of the Epsom Races and I wish you to be at it and I long to reassure you of the friendship and regard of your old Subscriber."

<sup>1</sup> *Jerningham Letters.*

## Mrs Fitzherbert

Old Lady Caroline wrote the firmest of handwritings. When her brother the second Earl of Dorchester died, the Damer properties came to her, Came House and Milton Abbey in Dorset and Dorchester House in London. She was a merry old maid and paid up so much for George Dawson that she used to sign herself his "old subscriber."

These are specimens of her letters :

(February 22, 1817) " I have never done laughing to myself at the report of the Princess Charlotte having a wish to have Milton Abbey. How she would kick ! if anybody was to mention such a thing to her when she doats upon Clermont, always sorry to leave it even for a few days. Mrs Damer remained with Princess Elizabeth and returns tomorrow and we shall go to the Opera tomorrow night. Having told you how dissipated I am shall only add goodbye."

(February 28, 1821) " I am delighted at hearing a few days ago that the Queen would not stay in England more than two months but now that she has bought Cambridge House *near* here alarms me, whether she does or whether she does not. This I enclose to you is a Prayer and I think a good one.

Gracious Queen we thee implore  
Go away and sin no more :  
But if that effort be too great  
Go away at any rate."<sup>1</sup>

Lady Caroline mentioned the Mrs Damer who is often confused in books with Minney who also became Mrs Damer. This was Anne Damer, Lady Caroline's sister-in-law. Niece of the first Marquess of Hertford, she married the heir of Lord Milton, who had died sadly enough when his father refused to pay his debts. He supped at the Bedford Arms with four prostitutes and a fiddler. He then shot himself leaving a note that the people of the house were not to blame. Mrs Damer then became a sculptress of considerable fame. On

<sup>1</sup> *Portarlington Papers.*

## Lady Caroline Damer

the death of the other brothers Lady Caroline became the heiress. Her entry into the love affairs of Minney Seymour need be her only mention in history.

She provided the money to pay George's debts and by her Will promised him a good future. Moreover with sly indiscretion she wrote a letter to tell the King what she had done. Years later when George visited his sister at Chiswick she gave him "the copy of one which *she* wrote to the King about me. It is quite touching. She writes in it to set me right with him respecting *our* affair." So he wrote to Minney after she had become his wife.

When she died in 1829 her estates and name passed to the Dawsons. She was a merry old soul and we leave her at that.

But for years everybody except old Lady Caroline was against George Dawson: Mrs Fitzherbert, the whole Seymour family, the King and the Duke of York.

Minney could only hope that "the more *Mama* can be convinced of the firmness of his attachment to me, the more the delicacy of his conduct in not putting himself forward will be appreciated and deprive her of the power of saying what she did in London last year, that he kept always before me for the sake of keeping others away."

Finally George Dawson delivered a form of gentlemanly supplication to Mrs Fitzherbert:

"Madam, I feel the greatest diffidence in taking the liberty of writing to you. Although you once flattered me with your friendship, so many years have elapsed and so many unfortunate circumstances have taken place since that period that I own I have come to the determination of addressing myself to you with considerable embarrassment.

"My object in doing so is to request your permission to have an interview with Miss Seymour. My

## Mrs Fitzherbert

attachment to her has been so sincere and has been put to so many cruel trials during a course of six years that I cannot help flattering myself you will peruse this letter with some indulgence. The constant esteem and friendship with which she has flattered me during this period, make me also hope that notwithstanding the disadvantages attending her being united to me you will look more favorably upon the subject when you consider the peculiarity of our case. I am quite aware how unworthy I must appear to you to be the Husband of Miss Seymour and am the first to acknowledge with the greatest pride how fully it has been in her power to marry whom she chose. Her merit, her beauty, her Rank, every circumstance connected with her attests this. I possess no one advantage and have no one pretention but the sincere and evident affection I have so long felt for her. The hope that one day or other I might have the happiness to be united to her has made me consider it a duty to lose sight of all other circumstance and to labour to free myself of some debts that I might return to England without encumbrances. I have remained abroad for this reason and have fortunately been able to effect the object I had in view and I trust that by this one, among the many natural and fair objections to me, has been done away with.

“ Miss Seymour has informed me that she never will agree to marry me unless you can consent to her marriage, having restored to me the good opinion you once entertained of me. On this subject I beg leave most explicitly to declare that I myself feel that our union cannot be desirable unless it can ultimately conduce to your happiness to whom she owes so heavy a debt of gratitude and without which neither she or myself could be contented. But at the same time I feel that you as well as myself may have been the victims of malicious persons, who circulate sufficient calumny to keep up the annoyance which I unfortunately caused you and I am certain that if you would but be kind enough to inquire fully into every detail

## *This Sad Subject*

of the circumstances connected with the affair, you would not only acquit me but if possible you would have a more enlarged idea of the gratitude Miss Seymour feels towards you and of the great deference to your opinion which at all times and under all circumstances she explicitly declared to be of paramount consideration with her.

"As I cannot help flattering myself that Miss Seymour would consent to honor me by giving me her hand, could she do so with your consent, I must be allowed to add that I am so deeply impressed with the necessity of relieving your mind as well as our own from these disagreeable impressions that to bring about this desirable end and there is no step I could think degrading to me to take to prove to you how unfounded every accusation made against me has been.

"With respect to any annoyance I fear I must have given you, Madam, I am most sorry for it and if by any act or speech I may have unintentionally wounded your feelings I very sincerely ask your forgiveness."

Mrs Fitzherbert's reply was brief :

"Sir—I have received your letter requesting an interview with Miss Seymour. Her sister Mrs Morier being in Town it appears to me that her House and under the protection of her family would be the properest place for you to see her.

"I beg leave to observe that Miss Seymour is entirely her own mistress and must decide for herself.

"My feelings have been so harassed upon this *sad subject* and I have been made so completely miserable and unhappy that I must beg your permission to decline entering into the details contained in your letter."

Minney wrote to George Dawson from Brighton (April 9, 1824) :

"I am to be reduced to the alternative of making one of the two beings most interested about me

<sup>1</sup> *Portarlington Papers.*

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*



## Mrs Fitzherbert

wretched. This would sound a strong term and I am but too constantly reminded of how justly it would be applied to her I am living with, who during the last five months we have been here, though almost constantly so ill (as to preclude our having secrets of any kind) has repeatedly with tears in her eyes expressed how thankful she was for having passed the first tranquil period of time she had known for years since she had been here, which I cannot but know to be owing to the cessation of communications, true and false, about us that were constantly afforded her in the whirl of Paris and London Society. The King stayed here but a few weeks and nothing but that objectionable set of Brighton society has been established here so that I have passed my time almost alone. She is in somewhat better spirits and has felt most sensibly the kind interest you show for her. . . . The subject of the last two days has been Jane Paget's marriage with old Francis Conyngham. I am glad of it for I think him very amiable and calculated to overcome anything like the regret she long suffered from Lord Anglesey's unfeeling conduct towards her."

The Duke of York's kind approach to Mrs Fitzherbert had eventual effect, but it was not until the season of 1824 that the young people were allowed to consider themselves engaged. Lady Caroline Damer had played trumps. As she wrote later to Henry Dawson (October 5, 1826):

"*Private*. . . . I will tell you my Will as I did to George, when he applied to me about his Marriage as he said that the King would never consent to Miss Seymour marrying him till debts were paid, my answer was as to paying any *more* of *his debts* quite out of my power. But, my dear Mrs Louisa Damer being now dead, I will tell you my Will which is that I have left her Came House and all the property belonging to it, at her death to him and to all his issue Male according to Seniority if it was approved of and her fortune paid. I hope it will be a happy Match as I

## The King's Opinion

told him and hope his conduct will ever be grateful to the King and the Duke of York."

On a memorable June 26 they were allowed to meet and speak. By July 1825 the engagement was allowed to pass into a prospect of immediate marriage. Minney threw herself at the feet of the King to beg his "sanction and support" She recognised in her letter that the King "justly concurred in the opinion which was felt by my own family, but more particularly by her, to whom I have ever owed more than a daughter's gratitude and affection." (July 13, 1825)

The day after the King received Minney's letter, he had a conversation with the Duke of York to whom he wrote finally on the following day (July 15, 1825) that he took Minney's decision for granted to marry Mr Dawson, but he recommended "as the *best palliative* or *justification* in some degree for her sad imprudence" that steps should be taken by her

*"that the whole of her fortune should be placed in trustees' hands and settled entirely, solely and only upon her and upon any children she may probably have hereafter. When she has done this, she will completely exonerate Mr Dawson from every possible imputation of having been actuated upon by any principle or motive of self-interest; it is also the best means she can adopt, in some measure to soften the just and natural feelings of her best and truest friends and relations, and may possibly tend to reconcile them more hereafter to this step, which we do, and must all of us so deeply lament: there is also, this last good which will arise, out of this line of conduct (but which I fear at this moment will weigh but little with her) which is, that she will thus have secured herself and her children against every possibility of want, for the rest of her life.*

"I must now, dearest Frederick, give you an additional trouble; in the beginning of this letter, I told

## Mrs Fitzherbert

you that you was at liberty to communicate its contents, but it is *now my anxious wish*, that you should read the whole of it, *in extenso*, both to Mrs Fitzherbert, as well as to Minney Seymour, the *first moment* you can obtain an interview with them; after which, I must desire you to send for that most excellent and worthy man, and I may add valuable friend of mine, Minney Seymour's trustee, Mr John Forster of Lincoln's Inn, that you will then tell him that it was by *my desire* you had sent for him, you will then shew him and read him this letter and also desire him in consequence, *immediately* to prepare and draw up such documents and settlements as may be necessary, for the *entirely securing* to Minney Seymour *alone*, and to her children hereafter, the whole of her present property and fortune, and of vesting it entirely in the hands of *himself* and of other proper trustees, to be executed, signed, sealed and delivered, previous to the marriage ceremonies taking place."<sup>1</sup>

. The Duke of York answered the King (July 19, 1825):

"I have delayed making my report to Your Majesty of the result of my interview with Mrs Fitzherbert and Miss Seymour, which took place last Saturday, when I, in obedience to your commands, communicated your letter which I had the honor to receive from Your Majesty to them, till I could at the same time state what had passed between Mr Forster and me.

"Both the ladies appeared most affected by the extreme kindness of your letter, and after Miss Seymour, who was so nervous as to be hardly able to speak, had retired, Mrs Fitzherbert expressed herself in most feeling terms of acknowledgment for your goodness. She at the same time told me that she had already had an interview with Mr Forster upon the subject of settlements, and that she had anticipated Your Majesty's wishes upon that head, that Lieut-Col Damer had in the course of last week applied to Lady

<sup>1</sup> Windsor Archives.

## Lady Caroline's Will

Caroline Damer from whom he had received for answer that she was too much affected at present by the death of Mrs Lionel Damer to be able to enter into business, but that she thought it right to acquaint him, that she had in her Will bequeathed to him the Came estate."<sup>1</sup>

Minney wrote to her lover:

"I wrote my letter (not exactly yours) to the Duke and as he was at home he must have received it by ten o'clock. I could not get Mrs Fitzherbert to talk upon the subject last night so I only told her how much I wished to speak to the Duke, which she did not particularly encourage, saying that his time was so taken up he probably would not find time to call in Tilney St and, if he did, she did not think his opinion would afford me any particular satisfaction. However I told her I intended writing to him at once to request an interview he had partly offered to give me, to which she did not oppose and I therefore wished her good-night and went upstairs to write my letter. I found she had given the Duke to understand that I wished to see him to ask him to take some step in doing something for you and I implored his intercession with her upon a subject which had already caused us so much pain and that however my own feelings were decidedly made up while they were in such opposition with hers, to whom I owed more than a daughter's love and gratitude. I had not it in my power to take one step towards forwarding my own wishes or terminating the state of anxiety I had the misery of knowing I made her suffer from and how grateful I should be if he would give me an opportunity of seeing him before Sunday . . . as I think it most likely the Duke may call tomorrow, I think I shall not go out unless quite early in the evening. The Duke by the by ought in politeness to answer my note by naming the time I may expect him but I suppose his own *affaires de cœur* interfere with the interest he may shew in to those of his friends."

<sup>1</sup> *Windsor Archives.*

## Mrs Fitzherbert

After Minney's death, George Damer wrote to her nephew, Francis Seymour (February 7, 1849):

"The money under our marriage settlement was carefully and very properly taken care of. That Settlement was drawn up by George IV himself, aided by Lord Eldon and His Majesty very naturally objected to the Marriage. Every device that ingenuity could suggest was invented to show this very natural hostility. The result was a marriage Settlement of so unusual a severity that my friends thought that I ought to expostulate. But in those times no Solicitor would undertake my defence save one, Mr Parkinson now Solicitor to the Queen. He went to His late Majesty and to Lord Eldon and succeeded in completing the actual Settlement by which my dear wife was able to dispose of the amount of one half of her then fortune and to distribute the capital as she might think proper amongst the children."

The King was pleased to condone her marriage, but he was anxious to keep her nest-egg out of her husband's hands and Mr Forster was called in as lawyer and trustee to draw up terms which George Dawson described (August 13, 1825) as "unusual, degrading, and clearly betraying a want of confidence in me. If these terms, which are supposed to be such as will eventually ensure Miss Seymour's happiness, should fail to do so, if they should prove the source of misunderstandings between us, the blame must rest with the Personage who has been the cause of it."<sup>1</sup>

Minney's brother, George Seymour, answered hoping that such misunderstandings would not arise.

(August 14, 1825) "You have the best guarantee that this will not from the affection and confidence which my sister shews you in every circumstance relative to your union. From the part I took previous to my sister coming to her decision on the subject,

<sup>1</sup> *Ragley Papers.*

## The King Takes Charge

I cannot personally claim from you any kind feelings unless you can afford me any for now wishing earnestly it may make you both long and naturally happy."

MINNEY SEYMOUR TO GEORGE DAWSON

(July 23, 1825)

"The fact is that Mr Forster is now on the road between Windsor and London, as the King has taken the subject in his own hands without reference to any other individual. Mr Forster says his hands are become so tied up that he can no longer act except upon the plan of settlement the King himself has drawn out, which of course is to put everything in my power but in a manner, which in my view of things, which may be incorrect, is the most disagreeable manner. Mrs Fitzherbert thinks that at the distance I should be at Cowes it is better for me to remain on the spot, and while all this is going on, has kindly proposed going out of Town. There never was anything equal to Mrs Fitzherbert's goodness for she appears to have put any feeling of her own away."

Cowes (August 12, 1825)

"... It was owing to your giving me the first insight into the affair, that I gave Mrs Fitzherbert the message to Windsor saying I believe that I could not bear that I should have to draw for sums of general expenditure. . . . The arrangement that the King made at the moment he was irritated about us, was so little in accordance with this that I even attribute the letter your brother wrote to me was the chief cause of his agreeing to what I suggested with regard to the control you should have . . . as for your not understanding my feelings as to the cutting remarks of His Majesty I cannot attempt to explain what you naturally cannot enter into. I am neither apprehensive of his reminding you of your not being a Duke or of actual absence of fortune. . . ."

## Mrs Fitzherbert

Mrs Fitzherbert surrendered the prospects which she and the King had cherished of seeing Minney marry into the Peerage. That the future Earls of Portarlington and Earls Fortescue should spring from her future offspring was a consolation unrevealed to both. Good-naturedly, Mrs Fitzherbert wrote :

“ Dearest Minney—Pray accept the enclosed to buy Hats and Bonnets at Paris. I wish I was able to make it thousands instead of hundreds.”

Mrs Fitzherbert was not present at the marriage ceremony. The Register was signed by George Seymour, Lord Portarlington, Louisa Dawson, the Moriers and the King's Solicitor, Mr Forster. The King sent a fine jewel and a letter bidding Minney “ be always good to his dear old friend Mrs Fitzherbert,” which was a quaint way of alluding to his wife. Minney and George were married by the Dean of Carlisle at St. George's, Hanover Square on August 20, 1825.

A long chapter had concluded in Mrs Fitzherbert's life. She previously fled to Buxton, leaving the happy couple to honeymoon in Hampton Court Palace. To conceal her own sufferings she left Tilney Street that autumn for a tour amongst friends in the Midlands. At Buxton she was visited by the Duke of Devonshire, who begged her to visit Chatsworth. She visited Sir Thomas Stanley at Hooton near Chester. He had married her niece, Mary Haggerston. She lunched with the Grosvenors at Eaton Hall a fortnight before the birth of the first Duke of Westminster, who only died in 1899. After a visit at Chatsworth, she revisited Swynnerton in Staffordshire, where she was received by Thomas Fitzherbert, nephew of her second husband. Thence to Trentham in its glory where she found Lady Stafford full of laments that Minney had not become her daughter-in-law by marrying her second



NUMBER SIX TILNEY STREET, PARK LANE

Mrs Fitzherbert's later residence in London.  
From a drawing by Desmond Leslie.





## Visit to Rome

son, Lord Francis Leveson-Gower and later first Earl of Ellesmere. Courtesy, honour, and attention met Mrs Fitzherbert in all the stately mansions she visited.

The modern historian might easily imagine that a mistake had been made in Mrs Fitzherbert's letters referring to Lord Stafford. Trentham, which is now a public pleasure park, was the seat of a Lord Stafford (later Duke of Sutherland). But the more ancient and genuine Stafford Peerage was brought out of attainder in 1825 in favour of the Jerningham family, into which Mary Anne Smythe later married and became the ancestress of the present line of Lords Stafford, who are now happily seated in Mrs Fitzherbert's old home at Swynnerton. The Marquessate of Stafford is of course merely a later invention of the College of Heralds compared to the Barony whose first holder was a Fellow of the Royal Society and a Martyr for the Faith under the days of the "Popish Plot."

During the winter, Minney went South to visit the Riviera and Rome. At Nice she hunted in vain for the tomb of Mrs Fitzherbert's second husband who had died there forty-four years previously. Letters never ceased to flow between the devoted women. Minney found herself pregnant by the time she reached Rome, and Mrs Fitzherbert was anxiously house-hunting for her pending her return.

Mrs Fitzherbert took George Dawson almost as a son to her maternal bosom. Minney's love of him acted as a halo and henceforth dear George could do no wrong. They almost lived as a trio together, for Mrs Fitzherbert could little bear to be without her precious Minney.

Before the year had passed, Minney had borne a little Minney, during George's temporary absence at Clonmel fighting an Irish Election. Lord and Lady Glengall had persuaded him to stand against the representation of Lord Donoughmore for Tipperary. This double

## Mrs Fitzherbert

excitement of a birth at home and an Election across Channel reduced Mrs Fitzherbert to dire excitement, and two of her letters to George in Ireland survive as well as many of Minney's heroically scribbled from the bed of confinement.

George Dawson stood for Tipperary against the Hutchinson family at the wish of the Glengalls, and Mrs Fitzherbert took an unexpected interest. Minney wrote (June 19, 1826):

"Mama took care to recount to Sir Henry Halford all your Parliamentary intentions which she does in a manner directly opposite to what Lady Glengall's story would be. This is for the sake of being repeated at Windsor, and *elle s'excuse* to talk of your ideas to any one as if Tipperary was on its knees to have you for its member. The Duke of Bedford has got a daughter this morning so little Minney will have no choice but being Lady Carrickfergus. Mama is come in, very angry at my having written at all. As I had made a beginning, indulged me by letting me go on but says she will write herself to answer."

The little Minney's birth and Dawson's Irish Election coincided. The mother wrote to her husband (June 23, 1826 *a year since we first spoke*):

"What is so odd is his<sup>1</sup> violence against Mama for never communicating with him upon her intention of sending over her young gentleman, as he expresses it, as she was his oldest friend and the only person he ever visited in England. She has answered this to him very properly by saying she had nothing to do with you being representative of Lady Caroline Damer and being supported by the Glengall interest, whose politics were immediately opposed to his. Put it out of the question her soliciting his, had the idea crossed her. This is quite private so she begs you will not breathe the subject. . . . Lady Charlotte Osborne<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> John, second Earl of Donoughmore, head of the Hutchinsons.

<sup>2</sup> Daughter of sixth Duke of Leeds, married Sackville Lane Fox, May 22, 1826.

## Birth of Georgiana

having gone off with Mr Sackville is the last gossip. The Duke of Leeds refused his consent so they were asked at St George's three Sundays and married there yesterday with the ladysmaid for bridesmaid. So much for a pattern young lady! "

(July 1, 1826)

" Supposing you are successful, do not let your manifestations of gratitude be prolonged to an extent that will reduce you to hear of me suspended to the bedpost. Mama is rather fidgetty at your not taking notice of what she wrote to you about Lady Caroline Damer, as you went on the day you wrote Lou received her letter. She desires her kind regards and suggests that you ought to write, if you have not done so, a line of something like communicating intelligence to the old lady, as she has expressed her surprise at not hearing from you. I cut the enclosed out of the Paper yesterday. It looks as if your wish of being put on full pay was complied with but the Duke whom Mama saw yesterday never mentioned it and I had not, when she went to Brompton, found it in the Paper. She found the Duke very low and his legs terribly swelled. He spoke of your Election, of your certainty of success next Parliament. . . ."

The fairy godmother, Lady Caroline Damer was called upon to provide election funds, although it is clear that the demand for the necessary 2,000 pounds did not come from Tilney Street. Hence the indignant protest of Mrs Fitzherbert and Minney's fear that George's prospects in Lady Caroline's Will might be undermined by a premature move against her coffers.

On June 13, 1826, Georgiana Dawson, also " Minney," was born in Tilney Street. Mrs Fitzherbert informed Sir Henry Halford of the event and he carried the news to Windsor Castle.

Minney used the Prayer Book " given to her by the Bishop of Winchester April 21, 1804 " in which to

## Mrs Fitzherbert

record the births of her children. The first born was entered thus :

“ Georgiana Augusta Charlotte Caroline Dawson born June 13, 1826 in Tilney St. . . . Christened July 13th 1826 His Majesty King George the Fourth having condescended to be Godfather by his Proxy Lord Wharncliffe.”

Needless to say the name Caroline was in honour of Lady Caroline Damer, not of the unhappy Queen now happily laid in the vaults of Brunswick.

In time Georgiana bore fourteen children to the third Earl Fortescue before her early death in 1866. Through her Gainsborough's portrait of Mrs Fitzherbert and the Cosway locket of George IV mounted on a diamond passed as heirlooms into the Fortescue family. In 1832 Mrs Fitzherbert saw Minney bear the boy who eventually became the fourth Earl of Portarlington. He was old enough to attend the Coronation of Queen Victoria as a page and during that supreme ceremony was lost in the Abbey. He was found in the Queen's tiring room, playing on the knee of Her Majesty, who found the child a pleasant contrast to the solemnities of the day.

## CHAPTER XI

FOR MRS. FITZHERBERT.

*Catherine of Aragon.*

Remember me

In all humility unto His Highness:  
Say, his long trouble now is passing  
Out of this world tell him, in death I blessed him

SHAKESPEARE (*Henry VIII*).

FOR KING GEORGE IV.

I have done the State some service and they know it  
No more of that I pray you, in your letters,  
When you shall these unlucky deeds relate,  
Speak of me as I am; nothing extenuate  
Nor set down aught in malice then must you speak of one  
whose hand  
Like the base Indian, threw a pearl away.

SHAKESPEARE (*Othello*)

"Mrs Fitzherbert, as dignified a figure in the procession of history as her contemporary, the other discarded wife, who died at Malmaison, bowed her fair head to the decree and retired from the scene. Her case and that of Josephine were curiously similar. Though separated in the flesh, both continued to occupy a sacred place in their husbands' hearts. Both enjoyed the sympathy of the best and noblest in their respective countries *till the end*."—ABIGEL ROWL (*a Chronicle of the Regency by Hon Lewis Wingfield*).

MRS FITZHERBERT'S days were now a quiet slowing down into the Terminus. Minney's happy marriage filled her last days with a happy glow. Otherwise she was saddened by the deaths of friends. With the New Year she received what amounted to a death-sentence upon the Duke of York from one who would never deceive her, Sir Henry Halford, and she answered:

"Your letter has grieved me to the heart. The account of the poor Duke is sad, very sad. I have long thought his case deplorable, but now I begin quite to despair, and to feel that there is no chance of his recovery. Alas! what a loss the country, his

## Mrs Fitzherbert

family and his friends will sustain. I am sure none will feel or lament it more than I shall.

"The account of his having gone through the operation was publicly talked of here the day after it took place. I mention this for fear you should suppose I had communicated the contents of your letter, not one syllable of which ever passed my lips. I begin to think there is no such thing as a secret in the world.

"What shall I say or how can I express my thanks, my gratitude to you for the trouble you have been so kind, so generous as to take with regard to my papers. You have no idea of the weight of anxiety and uneasiness you have removed from my mind. For I don't think I should have had a moment's peace or tranquillity, had those papers fallen into the hands of those who on a former occasion made such mischief and so many disagreeable scenes and confusion."

The death of the Duke of York (January 5, 1827) was a deep blow and he seems to have been worthy of her deepest affection and respect. Later in the month, Minney wrote a letter of her sweetest sympathy to the King. It was the anniversary of his succession and she wished him a long long reign. She sent him word of his little god-daughter, and added a postscript (January 29, 1827):

"I must add to my letter to Your Majesty the expression of that sincere interest that has been felt for Your Majesty under the late very afflicting circumstances which could not in other manner be communicated to Your Majesty from the person in whose house I am now living."<sup>1</sup>

Mrs Fitzherbert received a mourning-ring in memory of the Duke which is now preserved at Swynnerton.

Whatever scandal had been raked against the Duke, he enjoyed singular praises from such different pens as

<sup>1</sup> *Portarlington Papers.*

## Croker Spreads Reports

Charles Greville in his *Memoirs* and the Countess of Blessington in her *Idler in Italy*. Mrs Fitzherbert was no friend to the Duchess any more than the Duke was to Catholic Emancipation, but she and the Duke continued a singular correspondence of which Lord Stourton recorded:

"It is well perhaps to state, that previously to the death of the Duke of York, they agreed on both sides that all their correspondence should be destroyed and she assured me, that when Sir Herbert Taylor gave her up her own correspondence, she was for two years employed in the perusal and burning of these most interesting letters. When Sir Herbert Taylor surrendered them to her in person, she told him that she had been almost afraid that they would have got these papers from him. He replied: Not all the Kings upon earth should have obtained them. She added, that had she entertained mercenary views, she believed she might have obtained any price she had chosen to ask, for the correspondence which it was in her power to have laid before the public; that she could have given the best private and public history of all the transactions of the country from the close of the American War down to the death of the Duke of York, either from her communications with the Duke, or her own connections with the opposite party, through the Prince and his friends."<sup>1</sup>

Even more important in some ways were the papers she had preserved in relation to the Prince and a decided effort was made by Sir William Knighton, the King's medical-secretary (sometimes alluded to as the "man-midwife") to steal them from the box which Mrs Fitzherbert kept in her room and with her wherever she travelled. At this time, Croker was spreading reports that she had never married the King, and the disappearance of the Papers would have been particularly convenient in Royal circles.

<sup>1</sup> *Lord Stourton's Narrative.*



## Mrs Fitzherbert

According to Croker's editor "intimacy led to the King imparting his own story, which was not always the same story, of his relations with Mrs Fitzherbert." It was a flat denial of the marriage, included in one of those statements which the Great hope will find favour with Historians in vain, for "Time is the old Justicer that examines all such offenders." Croker stayed with the King and wrote down the Royal memories for what they were worth:

(November 25, 1825)

"On the subject of my supposed marriage with Mrs Fitzherbert and the Debate upon Mr Rolle's observations, some false statements have been made. When Fox mentioned it to me, I contradicted the supposition at once with *pooh, nonsense, ridiculous* etc, upon which Fox in the heat of debate and piqued by Rolle, was induced, not merely to contradict the report, which was right enough, but to go a little further and to use some slighting expressions which, when Mrs Fitzherbert read them in the paper next morning, deeply afflicted her and made her furious against Fox. Mr Moore states that I applied to Mr Grey to set the matter right and that when he refused I said: Then we must bring Sheridan into play. There is not a word of truth in this. I had no kind of communication with Mr Grey on the subject, and Sheridan's interference was, so far as I was concerned, perfectly accidental.

"Calling that morning at Mrs Fitzherberts he found her in an agony of tears. Her beauty, her deep affliction affected him; he was also, as he afterwards said, afraid that the great power she had over me would be turned to make a breach between me and Fox, against whom she was exasperated and he therefore endeavoured to conciliate and console her, and, amongst other topics, he assured her that Mr Fox was misreported and that he would take the earliest opportunity of correcting any impression which might be made to her prejudice by saying in his place what

## Letters Destroyed

he as well as Mr Fox and everyone else must feel towards her.

"He accordingly made that celebrated eulogium on Mrs Fitzherbert, in which, however I never could discover what other folks fancied they found there, any confirmation of that absurd story of my supposed marriage. I looked upon it as gallantry to the lady, and as an effort to keep Fox and her on good terms which no doubt was my feeling also."<sup>1</sup>

Mrs Fitzherbert's letter-file contained letters from almost every member of the Royal Family and, had it not been for her secret relationship with that Family, many more would have been preserved, but nervousness on both sides led to many suppressions. A number only survived as autographs in Minney's collection. When the Duke of York's were destroyed, a quantity of the signed folders "York and Albany" were preserved for the same reason. Marianne took away a sheaf of these folders to her new home as well as a letter the Duke of York had written to her. She also kept letters written to Mrs Fitzherbert by the Duke of Sussex and Princess Elizabeth.

The note from Princess Elizabeth ran:

"August 21. Dear Mrs Fitzherbert: As I have had the pleasure of hearing from Sir Henry Halford that your health is so far improving as to admit of your taking the air, should you find yourself inclined to do so this day, can I tempt you to call on me about four? and need I say how it would please me seeing you again.

"Do not answer this I entreat. If you are pretty well you are sure of finding me and if it is not a good day with you then perhaps some other day I may be more fortunate Ever dear Mrs Fitzherbert yours very truly E."<sup>2</sup>

The Royal Dukes were constantly turning up in Mrs Fitzherbert's Life. They were not as rascally or

<sup>1</sup> *Croker Papers.*

<sup>2</sup> *Swynnerton Papers.*

## Mrs Fitzherbert

rampant or ungenial as they have been painted. Sussex was a sweeping Reformer, a Whiggish version of Philippe *Egalité*, but he can be recognised as the Chairman in Turner's sketch of a meeting of the Bible Society. Kent had died before the State or he himself could recognise the greatness of his wife's achievement. York was a constant visitor and by his popularity in the Army lived down his famous scandal. Clarence was playing at Lord High Admiral at sea, much to the bewilderment of the Admiralty. Cumberland alone seemed a little sinister. He was a rabid Protestant and in his heart he was grooming himself for a Throne. With their beaver hats and frog coats and trouser-straps these tall and corpulent brothers hardly needed stars on their breasts to denote their Royalty.

Mrs Fitzherbert's life had become simple. She spent the winter of Minney's marriage quietly in London and the next winter at Bath. Her life is only known from her letters to Minney. She was steadily putting her papers in order.

Tom Moore was writing the *Life of Sheridan*, and there was some alarm in Royal circles how he would treat the episode of Mrs Fitzherbert's marriage. Moore recorded in his *Diaries* (June 16, 1825):

"Lord Hastings expressed a wish to have a minute's conversation with me and on our reaching a retired part of the room said that he heard I intended to bring forward proof of the King's marriage with Mrs Fitzherbert. I answered that I had no such intentions but merely meant to allude to the constitutional consequences which would have resulted from such a marriage, had it taken place. It is evident, I think that the Carlton House people have expressed some alarm on the subject and that his Lordship volunteered his mediation to prevent what they dreaded. But does not this look as if Lord Hastings were aware such proofs exist?"

## Lady Conyngham Prevails

Mrs Fitzherbert returned to Brighton with 1827 and lived practically in mourning for her dear friend the Duke of York. She was offered some lamps she had given him in previous years, but preferred to purchase a more personal souvenir. An old letter from Mrs Fitzherbert to the Duke's secretary, Sir Herbert Taylor, survives. It alludes to the Duke's troubles over Army patronage (December 15, 1809):

"I am so delighted at the result of the Trial that I cannot refrain troubling you with one line to offer you my sincere congratulations and the best wishes of my heart that you may never again have anything more to trouble or torment you through life."<sup>1</sup>

This was an allusion to the Duke's trouble with Mary Anne Clarke which cost him the Commandership of the Army. In different ways the Royal Brothers all paid deeply for the affections of their hearts. Sir George Seymour left a note that King William "told me he knew George IV had paid £95,000 to Lady Conyngham to buy Bifrons." Bifrons was an estate near Canterbury to which Lady Conyngham retired and died in grace in 1861.

Lady Conyngham had no love for Brighton while Mrs Fitzherbert was resident Queen. In March she prevailed on the King to leave the town, which owed so much to him, for ever. There were wild rumours that Mrs Fitzherbert would return to her old position and she wrote to Minney soon after the Royal departure (March 18, 1827):

"What can you and Louisa mean by your jokes and insinuations about the Pavilion? I think you have both lost your senses upon that subject. It is, I assure you, quite news to me nor can I account for what has given rise to such foolish reports."

<sup>1</sup> *Taylor Papers.*

## Mrs Fitzherbert

Mrs Fitzherbert passed the winter of 1827 in London, and in the spring her beloved Mary Anne became engaged to Edward Stafford Jerningham, second son of Lord Stafford, a descendant of the Catholic Martyr who perished at the time of the "Popish Plot." Mrs Fitzherbert accompanied her dear child to Cossey, called "the Windsor of Norfolk" where the marriage took place on June 16. Since that date two of Mary Anne's sons have become Lords Stafford (Augustus and Fitzherbert). Then by one of those curious vicissitudes of family, her daughter Emily married Basil Fitzherbert of Swynnerton and the Peerage is now connected with the Fitzherbert name.

Maryanne had lost a baby and the Duke of Sussex wrote from Kensington Palace :

"It was only last night I was aware of the sad misfortune with which poor Mrs Jerningham had been visited. As I always must feel interested in what concerns you and knowing how much you have your niece's interest at heart I cannot refuse myself the melancholy satisfaction of expressing to you my concern on the occasion and likewise to inquire after the poor little lady. Believe me, dear Mrs Fitzherbert, with great sincerity AUGUSTUS FREDERICK."<sup>1</sup>

Mrs Fitzherbert then joined the Dawsons in Paris and they all returned to London. During the winter of 1828 she lived quietly at Brighton, entertaining in turn the Dawsons and the Jerninghams. For the New Year she actually gave a Fancy Dress Ball which threw the *Brighton Gazette* into a gala. It was hailed as the most splendid ever seen in Brighton. "Mrs Fitzherbert wore a rich dress of white satin trimmed with blonde and a white dress hat." There was a profusion of Miss Smythes and Jerninghams. Lady Emily Butler appeared as Mary Queen of Scots and Lady Ellen-

<sup>1</sup> *Swynnerton Papers.*

## Return to Brighton

borough as Queen Elizabeth. Lord Granville was present in Windsor uniform and Marshal Lord Beresford as a Sultan.

In this year, Mrs Fitzherbert bought Mr Rigby's house in Upper Grosvenor St for £13,000 as a present for Minney Dawson.

Summer was spent by Mrs Fitzherbert at Tilney Street, and in the autumn she returned to Brighton. While her house was being repaired, she stayed at the Royal York Hotel, and here she received the Duke and Duchess of Clarence on their arrival from Dieppe by sea. Coming events cast their shadows before them for the Duke was now Heir-Apparent to the Throne, which made him more affable and foolish than ever.

"On his return from abroad in the same autumn 1829 I also met Their Royal Highnesses the Duke and Duchess of Clarence on their landing at Brighton and dined with them with Mrs Fitzherbert, Lady Downshire and Lady Seymour, a party he had made by a previous letter sent over to Brighton.

"There had been in 1829 a question of my brother Horace marrying Miss Amelia FitzClarence (since Lady Falkland). She had accepted his offer with the Duke's approval if Lord Hertford would come forward to his assistance in making some settlement, which was the more necessary as what Horace had possessed originally had been settled on the issue of his first marriage. Lord Hertford disappointed the expectations his usual friendly conduct to Horace had led to, and unequivocally refused any assistance and soon afterwards the Duke desired me to obtain from Horace Miss FitzClarence's Letters and to return them to him which I did and the matter terminated."<sup>1</sup>

In the following year the Throne became vacant. With bitter regret King George IV had signed the Bill for Catholic Emancipation suggesting they get "a Catholic King in Clarence" who with Sussex had

<sup>1</sup> MS note by Sir George Seymour: *Ragley Papers*.

## Mrs Fitzherbert

warmly advocated this measure of tolerance in the Lords.

Mrs Fitzherbert had entertained these two Dukes and on one occasion was annoyed by the notice in the papers (though by now they left her alone as a rule). She scribbled to Minney:

"I have been desired by several people to put a paragraph into the *Times* newspaper as follows.

" "It was the Dukes of Clarence and Sussex that dined and passed the Evening at Mrs Fitzherbert's party and not the Duke of Cumberland, inserted by mistake in the *Morning Post*."

"Tell me if you and Dawson think I may send this and tell me to whom I may send it. God bless you."

And later:

"I am very much annoyed at not seeing the Paragraph in the *Morning Post* you so good-naturedly undertook to manage for me. Probably you forgot it. Pray send me the Scrap of Paper I gave you for that purpose that I may send it and have it inserted to-morrow though a day late."

Mrs Fitzherbert was far more annoyed when the *Globe* and *The Times* stated that the King had no more use for Minney and had omitted her and George from his party. Mrs Fitzherbert sent Minney word:

"The King read it and behaved beautifully upon the occasion (violent and outrageous to the greatest degree) and wishing very much to find out who could have been the author of so diabolical and malicious an invention, he put himself into a violent passion and declared that he had always had the greatest affection for Minney and that if he had given any party she and Colonel Dawson would have been the first he should have invited etc."

Without mentioning names, Mrs Fitzherbert was suspicious that the author of the libel wrote from under

## The King Sinking

the Royal roof. Lady Conyngham had weaned the King from his love of Brighton, and there is an amusing reference to Her Ladyship in a letter from Minney to say:

"Lady Grantham heard from Lady Jersey this morning who says that the King is forbid by Sir Henry Halford from going to Brighton. It is however suspected that this would militate more considerably against another Physician's orders who is still *souffrante*."

Brighton still meant Mrs Fitzherbert and against both Lady Conyngham set her influence to the end.

By May 1830, the King had begun to sink and all Courts were postponed. In real anxiety Mrs Fitzherbert left Brighton for Tilney St, but not before she had communicated with Sir Henry Halford, who was in charge of the King's bedside. Minney had sent her news of the King's serious condition, and she answered (June 1, 1830):

"I have frequently intended writing to Sir Henry [Halford] but I have always delayed it for fear of being thought intruding and curious, but your letter has given me courage and I have by this night's mail dispatched a letter for him under cover to Whale<sup>1</sup> to leave at Sir Henry's door, for if it were known, in this gossiping place, that I had written or had received, a letter a thousand falsehoods would have been afloat."<sup>2</sup>

Sir Henry replied from Windsor (June 3, 1830):

"My dear kind Madam, I have not written a letter, nay not a note, since I came to Windsor on Sunday Se'nnight, excepting to such of the Royal Family as required information and as it was my duty to give it. But I yield most willingly to our friendship what I should withhold on any other possible ground and motive. The King has been, and continues excessively ill, with embarrassment and difficulty of breathing.

<sup>1</sup> Mrs Fitzherbert's butler.

<sup>2</sup> *Fitzherbert Papers*, III.



## Mrs Fitzherbert

The worst circumstances under which I ever witnessed the Dukes of Clarence and of Sussex, under their attacks of spasmodic asthma, hardly come up to his Majesty's distress at times. What is to be the result I can hardly venture to say with confidence. His Majesty's constitution is a gigantic one and his elasticity under the most severe pressure exceeds what I have ever witnessed in thirty eight years' experience. I think I can say with much more certainty what must be *my own fate*, unless a speedy amendment or fatal issue arrives soon, for I have devoted myself to His Majestys service from a grateful sense of his confidence in me, as well as from my loyalty; and the constant calls upon my powers, both of body and mind, now press almost too heavily upon me, as they occur both day and night."<sup>1</sup>

Maryanne Jermyingham wrote to her husband to say :

" Dear Mama is very much better and yesterday appeared in greater spirits than I have seen her for some time past. The accounts of the King continue much the same. Mama's despatch to the Bank concerning *certain private Papers* proved extremely satisfactory and it appears that in the event of the King's death that sum at least cannot be taken from her, not that I have the least apprehension on the subject myself, for what she now enjoys is surely her right and as such who would attempt to deprive her of it ? "<sup>2</sup>

During the King's last months, Minney wrote to George of Lady Conyngham (November 29, 1829) that she

" had consulted Sumner and Pearson<sup>3</sup> as to the propriety or rather impropriety of her remaining with the King and that they had given it in favor of morality, her remaining where she was, from the chance it afforded of making the King look out for a *remplacante* and create fresh scandal."

<sup>1</sup> *Fitzherbert Papers*, III.

<sup>2</sup> *Swynnerton Papers*.

<sup>3</sup> Sumner and Pearson were Divines, of whom Sumner became Bishop of Winchester and eventually Archbishop of Canterbury.

## The King's Ending

(June 9, 1830) "Yesterday was a very gloomy day to me. Poor Mama was really quite unwell and too weak to move upon her sofa, so much so that she nearly fainted at making the exertion. . . . I should regret instead of encouraging any sympathy that was shewn me for what I felt for the poor King's present state, but from yourself, who alone know my feelings and I believe very particular circumstances make them differ from any other human beings. When I endeavoured to convey to you my regret at your going to Ascot you rather treated it with a degree of contempt as if I was acting like a person who wished to curtail your amusements."<sup>1</sup>

Minney wrote affectionate words to her dying "Prinney" and Sir Henry Halford wrote to Minney from Windsor (May 14, 1830):

"I will take care to find an opportunity of laying your affectionate expressions of deep solicitude about His Majesty before the King. It is not without the greatest difficulty that I find an opportunity of writing even to Lady Halford. I can only say therefore that though the King had a very bad night, His Majesty has had some sleep this forenoon and I think Him refreshed and a little better but it is not sufficient to be announced publicly as an *improvement of any consequence* in His Majesty's symptoms. I am truly sorry to hear Mrs Fitzherbert has been confined. Pray assure her of my sincere esteem and attachment. P.S. Since I wrote the above I have stated your most affectionate inquiries after His Majesty to the King who desired me to be sure to give you His very affectionate love."<sup>2</sup>

The King was slowly yielding life amid the scenes of delusion and distress which possessed him. There was no one about him who really loved him at the last. Sir William Knighton was a knave, and Lady Conyngham a featherer of her own nest. In the back-

<sup>1</sup> *Portarlington Papers*.

<sup>2</sup> *Fitzherbert Papers*, III.

## Mrs Fitzherbert

ground the Iron Duke watched a little grimly. The King had put everything into his hands as his Executor. Mrs Fitzherbert could only imagine the unhappiness of the dying King, and her whole instinct was to comfort the soul of the man she had loved so deeply before he crossed the brink for ever. She wrote under cover a letter which survives in her own copy at Windsor "written a short time before the death of the King."

"Sir—After many repeated struggles with myself, from the Apprehension of appearing troublesome or intruding upon Your Majesty, after so many years of continual Silence, my Anxiety respecting Your Majesty has got the better of my Scruples, and I trust Your Majesty will believe me most sincere, when I assure you how truly I have grieved to hear of your Sufferings. From the late account, I trust Your Majesty's health is daily improving, and no one can feel more rejoiced to learn Your Majesty is restored to complete Convalescence, which I pray to God you may long enjoy, accompanied with every degree of happiness you can wish for or desire.

"I have enclosed this letter to Sir Henry Halford, as Your Majesty must be aware that there is no person about him through whom I could make a Communication of so private a nature, attended with the perfect conviction of its never being divulged."<sup>1</sup>

Sir Henry gave the letter to the King who seized it gladly, read it with emotion, and placed it under his pillow—but he was beyond making answer. He was crippled and seldom conscious. In vain Mrs Fitzherbert waited in Tilney Street on the chance that the King might send her a last summons. But her letter was too late. The King himself was summoned. The month of June was not to pass to its finish before the King was dead. Sir Henry Halford was holding his hand when he breathed his last. It was nearly three o'clock on the

<sup>1</sup> *Fitzherbert Papers*, I.

## The New King

Saturday morning of June 26. The great bell of St Paul's tolled the news to the citizens of London. Few can have heard the bell from their slumbers, but a friend of Mrs Fitzherbert happened to be abroad, and hearing the signal made his way to Tilney Street, where he informed her that she was for the third time a widow.

Mrs Fitzherbert's grief was deep and genuine. With her Minney mourned no less, and the first rift appeared between her and George Dawson-Damer because he could not help attending Ascot Races while the King was dying. The Dawsons had become Damers in the previous year.

According to the *Greville Memoirs* the new King, William IV

"sent the Duke of Sussex to Mrs Fitzherbert to put her servants into mourning for his brother, yet he would have none himself nor allow those around him to wear it."

Mrs Fitzherbert clung to the belief that the King remembered her in his last hours. According to Lord Stourton:

"She told me Yes and that she would show me the copy of a letter which she had written to the King a very short time before his death, which she said had been safely delivered by a friendly hand; the person assuring her, that the King had seized it with eagerness and placed it immediately under his pillow, but that she had not received any answer. She was, however, informed that, on the few last days of his life, he was very anxious to be removed to Windsor Cottage.

"Nothing, she said, had so cut her up, to use her own expression, as not having received one word in reply to that last letter. It is true, she observed, that she had been informed by the Duke of Wellington, that he more than once expressed his anxiety that a particular picture should be hung round his neck and deposited with him in the grave, and it seemed to be

## Mrs Fitzherbert

the opinion of his Grace that this portrait was one which had been taken of her in early life, and was set round with brilliants. It appeared the more likely, as this portrait was afterwards missing when the others were returned to her."<sup>1</sup>

To this Sir George Seymour added a MS note :

" William IV desired me to take to Mrs Fitzherbert in 1830 the portraits George IV had possessed of Mrs Fitzherbert . . . (the rest has been scissored)."

And a later note :

" I conveyed within a week after George IV's death *nine* portraits of Mrs Fitzherbert to her from William IV by His Majesty's directions. There was a tenth (a miniature which George IV had always retained) which was by his directions placed round his neck in the Coffin. Sir Wathen Waller and Sir Frederick Waston, Master of the Household, told me they had seen it there. Mr Whitney, the Page, thought it was Lady Conyngham and so told Queen Victoria (as I have heard) but I have no doubt it was Mrs Fitzherbert's portrait."<sup>2</sup>

Of the several Eyes and Miniatures which had passed between them as lovers the most famous were the Cosway miniatures, of which Mrs Fitzherbert retained the Prince's, mounted on a diamond and closed by a secret spring. Poor old King George III had held stricter views on the bestowal of lockets to ladies, for when he presented one bearing his cameo portrait to Mrs Delaney, he was particular to enclose Queen Charlotte's hair.

Sir George Seymour's Diary gives a later date for the return of the Miniatures in 1830.

" (May 30) Went to Mrs Fitzherbert in the evening who promised to shew me the papers relative to her *marriage*<sup>3</sup> with the King.

<sup>1</sup> *Lord Stourton's Narrative.*

<sup>2</sup> *Ragley Papers.*

<sup>3</sup> The word "marriage" could not as yet be mentioned and was subsequently added in different ink.

## The Miniature

" (June 21) Dined with Frederick [Seymour] at Mrs Fitzherbert's who was unwell.

" (June 26) George IV died at  $\frac{1}{4}$  past three a.m. At 11 the House of Lords met and took the oaths. At 12 William IV assembled the Privy Council.

" (June 28) The King at St James Council. He opened George IV's Will who is supposed to have declared intestacy.

" (November 6) Rode to Kensington Palace. Met the King at Mrs Fitzherbert's.

" (December 5) The King sent for me to take some miniatures to Mrs Fitzherbert. Paid Mrs Fitzherbert a long visit on the subject principally of the King's message. She said a small picture the late King had was missing still. It was buried with the King on his neck.<sup>1</sup>

" (May 31) Called on Mrs Fitzherbert in the evening who consulted me about the validity of a Bond from the King securing her £6000 per annum on the Pavilion and his Brighthelmstone property, which is therein stated to be free from previous incumbrances except a charge of £17,000 to Weltze. The Bond is dated in 1808, is witnessed by Mr Bicknell, by whom it was drawn up. Mrs Fitzherbert says by the recommendation of the Duke of York Sir W. Adam assisted in wording it so as to give every possible validity. H. Errington is the Trustee to whom the Bond is addressed throughout for Mrs Fitzherbert's advantage."

Lord Stourton continued:

" I have evident proof that the belief expressed by her, that a miniature picture was suspended round the neck of the King and buried with him, was correct. The King appeared to have been possessed of three portraits of Mrs Fitzherbert. At his death, only two of these could be found; and though his gracious successor on the throne, King William the Fourth, promised his best exertions to restore the third, as well as the two others to Mrs Fitzherbert, it never

<sup>1</sup> This sentence is a subsequent entry.

## Mrs Fitzherbert

was found. I have this well-founded account, that the third resemblance of her, to whom George the Fourth had, in his early years, been so devotedly attached, was, in fact, suspended from his neck at his death, and with him committed to the grave.

"It appears that Mrs Fitzherbert had, in her correspondence with the late Cardinal Weld, expressing her strong conviction, that George the Fourth had requested he should be buried with that portrait round his neck. This correspondence had been communicated by the Cardinal to his brother-in-law, then at Rome, Charles Bodenham esq. of Rotherwas. This gentleman subsequently communicated the following results of his inquiry on this subject:

"It so happens, that my family were particularly intimate with the late Dr Carr, Dean of Hereford, who was subsequently translated to the Bishopric of Chichester and then to Worcester. He was very kind and friendly with me; and, when at Worcester, I always called at the Palace. Mrs Fitzherbert having been my wife's aunt, I had always felt *much interest* in getting at *the truth* of her history; and knowing, from the public journals, that the Bishop had attended the King in his last illness, I alluded to what I had heard about the portrait. It was the last interview I ever had with Dr Carr. On my mentioning the name of Mrs Fitzherbert, he said: Oh she was very amiable, my faithful friend! Yes it is very true what you have heard: I remained by the body of the King when they wrapped it round in the cere-cloth, but before that was done, I saw a portrait suspended round his neck—it was attached to a little silver chain.

"The Bishop seemed exceedingly overpowered and I took an opportunity to leave the room soon after. I went into the next apartment, where I *immediately* wrote down in my pocket book the *very words* he had used and the above is the exact copy."<sup>1</sup>

On this point Mrs Fitzherbert communicated with

<sup>1</sup> *Lord Stourton's Narrative.*



MINIATURES OF MRS FITZHERBERT AND THE PRINCE OF WALES  
BY COSWAY

By kind permission of the Earl of Portarlington





## The Two Locketts

the new Monarch and was answered by Sir George Seymour :

“ The King sent for me yesterday evening to desire I would tell you that he had caused inquiries to be made about the little picture of yourself in a gold case, and that he had every reason to believe it was *not* removed from the late King’s neck. Sir Frederick Watson confirms this circumstance, which must afford you some satisfaction, however melancholy it will be, and I believe they are right, as it was seen on his neck a twelvemonth back also.”

This miniature was the exquisite painting by Cosway set with brilliants and inserted in a locket which the King had never ceased to wear in memory of his life’s greatest passion. The corresponding half of the diamond carrying the King’s miniature was preserved by Mrs Fitzherbert to her death, when it was left to Minney Dawson-Damer.

Minney did not know how to open the locket left her by Mrs Fitzherbert until she once found herself dining with the Duke, who asked her if she knew the trick of opening it. He then touched the secret spring and it flew open.

The Duke was the only person living who had handled both the lockets. Mary Frampton recorded another occasion in her Diary :

“ Some time the Duke of Wellington when one evening sitting next to Mrs Damer said to her with some hesitation : I daresay you may like to know something of the lost jewel, but added, perhaps I had better not tell you. She pressed him however to continue when the Duke proceeded to state with some confusion that in his office as First Lord of the Treasury it had been his duty to remain till the very last with the body of the King, who had given him strict injunctions not to leave it and had desired to be buried with whatever ornaments might be upon his

## Mrs Fitzherbert

person at the time of his death. The Duke was quite alone with the body then lying in an open coffin and his curiosity being excited by seeing a small jewel hanging round the neck of the King he was tempted to look at it, when he found it was the identical portrait of Mrs Fitzherbert covered with the diamond, for which the unsuccessful search had been made. The Duke added: I leave it to you to communicate this or not to Mrs Fitzherbert as you may think best for her. As Mrs Fitzherbert scarcely ever alluded to her former connection with George IV, Mrs Dawson Damer doubted as to the propriety of naming this to her: but one day when the conversation between them led that way she ventured to tell the discovery. Mrs Fitzherbert made no observation but soon large tears fell from her eyes."

## CHAPTER XII

### FOR KING WILLIAM IV.

"His humour is lofty, his discourse peremptory, his tongue filed, his eye ambitious, his gait majestical, and his general behaviour vain, ridiculous and thiaconical"—SHAKESPEARE (*Love's Labour's Lost*)

WILLIAM THE FOURTH was always anxious to go further than the Duke of Wellington in meeting Mrs Fitzherbert's claims and wishes. Of his own accord he had desired her servants to wear mourning, when neither the Hertford nor the Conyngham domestics dared show an inch of crape. The King insisted on redeeming the Deed for £6000 a year which she held on the Pavilion and accordingly he signed a document to the effect that

"it is Our Royal Will and Pleasure that the Keeper of Our Privy Purse, for the time being, so and shall during Our life pay to Maria Fitzherbert of Tilney Street, in the County of Middlesex, Widow, during her life an Annuity or annual sum of £6000 etc. etc. charged upon certain Freehold and Copyhold Property, belonging to His late Majesty King George IV, situated at Brighton in the County of Sussex by an Indenture given 16th March 1808.

"Given at Our Palace at Windsor the 18th day of August in the first year of Our Reign."<sup>1</sup>

In return she signed a release on any claim to the late King's property. With the Will which she still possessed she might have made stupendous demands, but she could justly tell the Duke of Wellington "that she had never in her life been an interested person." What an adventuress could have achieved with the documents in her possession staggers computation. Only two of the mildest jobs can be traced to Mrs Fitz-

<sup>1</sup> *Fitzherbert Papers*, I.

## Mrs Fitzherbert

herbert's influence. She requested a Baronetcy for Charmside the physician, and an Equerryship for Dawson-Damer.

In the month following, the new King and Queen came to Brighton and did everything possible to place her upon an honourable footing.

The Duke wrote to her from Walmer Castle (August 15, 1830):

"My dear Madam, Mr Lowdham has sent here the copies of Papers which he will have submitted to you by the hands of your Collector, Mr Forster, by which the King will provide for the payment of your Annuity charged upon Brighton; and you will release the late King's Personal Property from any demand you might have upon it on account of that Annuity. I recommend to you to sign that release. In truth as your Annuity is charged upon the Property 'at Brighton your release of the Personal is necessary only to enable the executors of the late King's Will to hand over the whole of the Personal Property to the Treasury."

George FitzClarence, as the son of his father, thought fit to interfere a little fussily and the Duke was constrained to write to Sir Herbert Taylor, the King's Secretary (August 23, 1830):

"I have received your letter in which you tell me that you think you have satisfied Colonel FitzClarence that he had taken a wrong view of the arrangement with Mrs Fitzherbert.

"Unfortunately, however, by his interference he has done a good deal of mischief before he had discovered the error. I passed two hours with Mrs Fitzherbert on Friday; and with some difficulty prevailed on that lady to promise that she would sign the release of the late King's private personal property from all claims on her part on account of the annuity; without which release neither the King's executors nor the Treasury can apply it to the King's uses.

## FitzClarence Interferes

" We have not yet got the release, and I don't know whether Mrs Fitzherbert will sign it. If the delay was attended with no other inconvenience than to render it necessary for me to pass two hours more with Mrs Fitzherbert to convince her that Colonel FitzClarence knows nothing about the matter and that I do know something about it, that inconvenience would be no trifle, as I have no time to spare. But besides this the King's private affairs suffer as well as the public business.

" Colonel FitzClarence may rely upon it that he cannot have the King's private interests at heart to a greater degree than I have; and that they will not suffer in my hands. I entreat him not to interfere in matters which are of public concern with which he has nothing to do; and in which his interference can produce only inconvenience and delay.

" I am quite certain from what passed between Mrs Fitzherbert and me, and from what I have heard, that the delay is to be attributed to her communications with Colonel FitzClarence through a third person whose name I know."<sup>1</sup>

On the next day Mr Forster wrote to Mrs Fitzherbert (August 24, 1830):

" My dear Madam—I have delivered the Releases to Mr Lowdham and have obtained from him in exchange the King's Order for payment of the £6000 per annum out of the Privy Purse, which I now enclose. I also send you a copy of the release which you signed this morning.

" These papers should be put up with the Security on the Pavilion."<sup>2</sup>

A more satisfactory go-between at this time was the King's brother, the Duke of Cambridge, from whom a note survives to Mrs Fitzherbert (August 30, 1830):

" I return you the enclosure with many thanks, the perusal of which has given me great pleasure as I see

<sup>1</sup> *Duke of Wellington's Despatches*, Vol. VII.

<sup>2</sup> *Fitzherbert Papers*, I.

## Mrs Fitzherbert

by it that the commission I were charged with from the King has gratified him as much as it has done myself. I sincerely hope that you are arrived safe at Brighton where I hope to have the pleasure of finding you better when I call upon you on Thursday next and in the meantime, my dear Mrs Fitzherbert, I remain yours ever most sincerely ADOLPHUS FREDERICK.”<sup>1</sup>

The new King remained staunch to Mrs Fitzherbert. He had been at variance with her great friend the Duke of Kent until his death. Kent, “though sensible was never right” was his opinion. He was even more at variance with Sussex who had apparently gone over to the Socialists. Except for Cumberland no one could say that the Royal Dukes were bigoted or hide-bound. They went over freely to the side of the Whigs, the Radicals, and the Catholics.

King William had wished his son George to marry Minney, and used to forward messages from her and Mrs Fitzherbert to him in India. As Duke of Clarence, he had been anxious himself to marry Miss Wykeham, whom he described to FitzClarence as “the Oxfordshire heiress.” But the Cabinet forebade the romance and the poor Duke wrote touchingly to his son that

“to satisfy the nation as to the succession of the Crown and permanently to serve *you nine*” I sacrifice my heart and my happiness. I must and do regret Miss Wykeham but her name to you I must not mention again.”<sup>2</sup>

Clarence had sighed as a lover, but obeyed as a Prince, and found a bride in the good Princess Adelaide. He wrote to FitzClarence:

“I believe I shall have virtue and innocence I hope with the concurrence of the Regent, the Queen and all my sisters. At least misery will not attend me.”

<sup>1</sup> *Mrs Dawson-Damer's Autograph Book.*

<sup>2</sup> The nine illegitimate children by Mrs Jordan.

<sup>3</sup> *FitzClarence Papers.*

## “The Irregular Scions”

And now he found himself King as a reward of his virtue with Respectability for Queen on his arm.

George FitzClarence had now become a person of some importance. He never ceased to correspond with Minney. When he was made a Peer, he used to sign Franks for her, to enclose letters to her favoured husband. Could chivalry go further? He continued to hang round Mrs Fitzherbert's abodes which became filled with his melancholy and unrestrained letters. He wrote them the most interesting scenes from Court. He collected and conveyed any gossip which he thought might please Mrs Fitzherbert and Minney, but also he threatened, he raved and alas, he despaired. The Duke of Clarence was always warning his handsome and impetuous son against using violent language towards the Regent. On coming to the Throne he found the same language turned even more violently against himself, especially when FitzClarence wished to dictate the conditions of his Peerage. It was one of Mrs Fitzherbert's many charities to the Royal Family that she strove to keep the peace between father and son, between the King and his ill-starred bastard. But it was not easy. The King shewed himself full of forgiveness and loving kindness, but FitzClarence considered himself a highly injured individual. The King was as puzzled how to treat his son as were Press and Court. *The Times* (December 21, 1830) remarked that “the irregular scions of a certain illustrious House are becoming troublesome.” Something had to be done. In May of 1831, FitzClarence was advanced to the Peerage as Earl of Munster and *The Times* noted that “the relationship of this gentleman to the fountain of honour united to his high attainments, moral worth and professional reputation entitle him to such a mark of paternal regard.”

A note by Lady Constance Leslie reads:

“He had always adored Minney, not she him and



## Mrs Fitzherbert

Mrs Fitzherbert opposed it also. She had had enough of the Royal Family, though William IV was so kind to her. Munster was very poor and married the illegitimate daughter of Lord Egremont of Petworth and it was a miserable marriage. I burnt many letters full of his grievances and one from my mother<sup>1</sup> to him asking him not to write so lovingly and so on."

In the end the King made him Constable of Windsor Castle when Lord Conyngham died. All the Royal Palaces were opened to him, but Munster wandered moodily between Tilney St and Petworth and Brighton and remained estranged in spite of his friends.

The Munster letters filled an interesting corner of the *Portarlington Papers*, the most interesting being the hourly notes which he despatched from Windsor while King William was dying. Minney was always exerting herself to make reconciliation between the Royal Father and his handsome son. Mrs Fitzherbert's houses were the constant centres of pacification, and this was but another of the boons she afforded the Royal Family. We find Minney writing (August 21, 1832):

"FitzClarence has just called on his way from Windsor to Petworth. I am so glad he went to Windsor today to see the King on his birthday and I think it was the effect of my influence."

The correspondences exchanged sometimes attained large and ludicrous dimensions. Lord Egremont wrote to Steyne House (May 5, 1837):

"I am much obliged to you for the correspondence which I return and will not appear to know anything about it, until Lord Munster mentions it to me himself. I should have recommended one visit in preference to a hundred of these Protocols, which are more like the Manifestos of two Sovereigns on the eve of

<sup>1</sup> Minney Dawson-Damer.

<sup>2</sup> King William was born August 21, 1765.

## The Bishop's Wild Oats

a War than a reconciliation between a Father and his Son! ”

The new King proved a true friend to Mrs Fitzherbert. He has been much traduced as a ninny, a buffoon, or a turkeycock. He was a bluff sailor with an extraordinary power of saying things as they had better not be said, especially at public banquets. Lord Carlisle in his privately printed Journals has recorded a number of his public utterances which convey seeds of riotous laughter even to this day. In proposing an episcopal health he said: “ Ever since I came to the Throne I have liked to assemble at my table all sorts of people. Therefore I now give you the health of Our Lord Bishop of London! ” On another occasion, when the Primate as well as the Bishop were present, the King said “ he had sown his wild oats as I doubt not your Grace and your Lordship have done! ” Standing between Lord Fitzroy Somerset and Sir James Kemp, both distinguished soldiers, the King further distinguished them by saying: “ You, my Lord, have the blood of the Plantagenets in your veins: you, Sir James, are sprung from the very dregs of the people.” Lady Stuart de Rothesay recorded that his usual speech at Charity dinners ran thus: “ If, gentlemen, there is one Society more than any other Society, that deserves your support, *that* Society is *this* Society! ”

Sir George Seymour was fond of illustrating his kindness of heart:

“ The new King made a futile attempt to continue his private habits by walking up St James St unattended, which produced a Mob. It happened also that in going up from Frogmore to Windsor Castle on his first visit as its master that no arrangements had been made about the attendance of carriages and his own Barouche being the only ready, his gallantry to the Ladies in attendance upon Queen Adelaide led him

## Mrs Fitzherbert

to mount the Box on which the new Sovereign made his entry into his Citadel.

"He also told me that Mr Croker came up to him and said he supposed he should not remain as Secretary and that he had answered that he did not know why not as he understood him to be a useful public servant. On the Duke professing not to know why Mr Croker thought this, I asked whether Croker had not said something disrespectful to him in the course of argument at the Pavilion when a reference was made to the circumstance of James II having been the last King who was Lord High Admiral and that it had become public. The Duke entertained no recollection of the circumstance.

"No one could be more placable in circumstances which arose in social life when he could entertain no idea of disrespect being premeditated or intentional. I remember dining with him in 1825 or 26 at Lady Lansdowne's (the Dowager). On H.R.H. expressing some sentiments in favor of the Catholics Berkeley Paget, who was of the Party and had been nettled by some question the Duke had put him as to his vote and that of the rest of his family upon that question, said: he hoped he never should see a Person holding such sentiments on the Throne. The Duke laughed, dropped the conversation and said: Let's have another glass of wine and go into the other room!

"I don't think Berkeley meant to say anything so strong and personal but merely that such sentiments would be misplaced on the Throne but still the good-humoured tone of unaffected amusement of the other at the remark was equally laudable and expressive of his good temper.

"On his ascending the Throne he made Mrs Berkeley Paget one of the Queen's women of the Bed-chamber and never appeared to have remembered Paget's remark five minutes."<sup>1</sup>

The dates of Mrs Fitzherbert's contacts with the new King may be gathered from the columns of *John Bull*.

<sup>1</sup> Sir George Seymour: Confidential Memoranda. *Ragley Papers*.

## Dinner with the King

In September King William arrived in Brighton. "On September 4, the King visited the widow of Lord Nelson whom he had given away at the time of her marriage." The King went about unattended. He visited Lady Nelson "in a private chariot and was ushered into the coffee room!" On the same day "in the early part of the afternoon the King honoured Mrs Fitzherbert with a visit of about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an hour." On September 7, "Mrs Fitzherbert left her name at the Palace" and on the following day it was announced that "the Duke of Cambridge had visited Mrs Fitzherbert several times." On September 10, "the King honoured Mrs Fitzherbert with a visit at her Steyne Mansion." According to a letter Mrs Fitzherbert despatched to Minney it was on September 8, that she hobbled very lame into the Pavilion (September 10, 1830):

"My reception was most flattering. I was overwhelmed with kisses from males and females; the Princess was particularly gracious. I felt rather nervous never having been in the Pavilion since I was drove away by Lady Hertford. I cannot tell you my astonishment at the magnificence and the total change since my first acquaintance."

On the following Sunday she dined at the Pavilion and received a letter from Queen Adelaide the next day (Monday, September 13, 1830):

"Dear Madam, I hope you have passed a good night after your first going out and have not suffered from it. This fine day will enable you to take a drive which I am certain will do you much good. According to my promise I send you the Litography after my drawing of my niece Louisa and include also *your own property* which I kept so long under my care. I hope you will recognise it as the *genuine* paper which amused us last year and shew it to me next year when we come back to the Pavilion. I was delighted to see

## Mrs Fitzherbert

you looking so well yesterday and trust we shall meet oftener next winter than we have done this year. Accept my best wishes for your health and happiness. Yours sincerely ADELAIDE."<sup>1</sup>

"When the King came out of Mrs Fitzherbert's on Thursday last (September 16) some person rather shabbily dressed went up to the carriage as it left the door and presented a note to the servants requesting them to give it to His Majesty. This not being complied with the fellow pushed forward and dropped the note into the carriage through the window."

The Duke of Sussex remarked to Mrs Herbert Taylor at this time (September 23, 1830):

"You'll be glad to hear, Ma'am, that the King has continued to Mrs Fitzherbert the same pension she had before—I am very glad of it, Sir, it does His Majesty great honor—Oh, Ma'am, the whole family made a point of it."<sup>2</sup>

The new Sovereigns were accompanied by the Duke of Cambridge, who brought his good-looking little boy to call on Mrs Fitzherbert. This boy made a romantic andmorganatic marriage in the future, and survived the whole Victorian Era, dying in 1904 after forty years' service as Commander-in-Chief.

Colonel George FitzClarence called to request Mrs Fitzherbert to visit the Pavilion, but she replied that she would prefer the King to pay her the first visit, which he chivalrously did. It was then that she disclosed written proofs that she was the King's sister-in-law. Lord Stourton continues as follows:

"She received the kindest messages from William IV; but upon his inquiry why she did not come to see him, she stated the peculiar difficulties of her situation, and a wish, if it was not asking too much from his condescension, that he would graciously honour her with a personal communication at her own house, previously to her visit to the Pavilion.

<sup>1</sup> *Fitzherbert Papers*, III.

<sup>2</sup> *Creevey Papers*.

## The Royal Livery

"The King kindly complied with her request without delay, and she told him that she could not, in her present circumstances, avail herself of the honour of waiting upon His Majesty, without asking his permission to place her papers before him and requesting his advice upon them. Upon her placing in his hands the Documents which have been preserved in justification of her character and especially the certificate of her Marriage, and another interesting and most affecting paper, this amiable Sovereign was moved to tears by their perusal, and expressed his surprise at so much forbearance with such Documents in her possession, and under the pressure of such long and severe trials. He asked her what amends he could make her, and offered to make her a Duchess. She replied that she did not wish for any rank; that she had borne through life the name of Mrs Fitzherbert; that she had never disgraced it, and did not wish to change it; that, therefore, she hoped His Majesty would accept her unfeigned gratitude for his gracious proposal, but that he would permit her to retain her present name.

"Well then : said he : I shall insist upon your wearing my livery<sup>1</sup>—and ended by authorising her to put on weeds for his Royal Brother. He added : I must however soon see you at the Pavilion—and I believe he proposed the following Sunday, a day on which his family were more retired, for seeing her at dinner and spending the evening at the Pavilion. I shall introduce you myself to my family : said he : but you must send me word of your arrival.

"At the appointed hour, upon her reaching the Pavilion, the condescending monarch came himself and handed her out of her carriage, and introduced her to his family, one after the other, as one of themselves. He ever after treated her in the same gracious manner, and on one occasion, upon her return from Paris, made her a present of some jewels, which he said he had some time, but would not send them to her

<sup>1</sup> Sir William Fraser recorded that King William offered to her a Peerage or the right to wear the Royal Livery. "She wisely chose the latter. I remember her servants in scarlet and blue."

## Mrs Fitzherbert

abroad, as he wished to give them to her himself on her return to England. He afterwards entered into conversation on matters relating to her dearest interests, and to sanction the custody of such papers as were thought most available in support of her honour and fair reputation with posterity.

"Mrs Fitzherbert told me, that the first day, when, in compliance with the commands of the King, she went to the Pavilion, and was presented by him to the Queen and Royal Family, she was herself much surprised at the great composure with which she was able to sustain a trial of fortitude which appeared so alarming at a distance; but she believed the excitement had sustained her. It was not so the next dinner at which she was present in the same family circle; and the many reflections which then oppressed her mind very nearly overpowered her."<sup>1</sup>

September 4, 1830, was the date of the King's historic visit of which Mr Wilkins wrote "no one else was present," but Colonel Dawson-Damer appears to have been there according to a surviving note:

"William IV on ascending the Throne, called at once on Mrs Fitzherbert at Brighton, begging her to wear the Royal Liveries and accept the Title of a Duchess. Mrs Fitzherbert replied that as she had never forfeited her good name as Mrs Fitzherbert she would not change it; my father, *then with her*, told us this."<sup>2</sup>

The title of Duchess she had already considered. She told Lord Stourton that when Fox "during his administration, made some overtures to her in order to recover her goodwill, she refused, though the attainment of the rank of Duchess was to be the fruit of their reconciliation. On naming the circumstances to me, she observed that she did not wish to be another Duchess of Kendal."

<sup>1</sup> *Lord Stourton's Narrative.*

<sup>2</sup> Note by Lady Constance Leslie.

## The King's Plans

In the same month Mrs Fitzherbert wrote to the King concerning finances :

" The only letter I wrote him on a subject of such immediate interest to myself and in which I explained to His Majesty the peculiar position in which an alteration of circumstances had placed me."

His Majesty also paid her a visit in her Tilney St. house, and Sir George Seymour, who was present, made a record of the conversation (November 6, 1830) :

" The King said he was going to add to the Pavilion! and make a Picture Gallery at St James' at the East End towards the Park! and that the Queen was to have 8 Drawing-rooms beginning with her birthday February 24 and ending with his May 28 and 4 Dress Balls in May and June. His Majesty repeated an anecdote of Talleyrand's to him that '*Bonaparte qui étoit brutal quand il ne voulait pas être poli, demandait à la Reine de Prusse à Erfurth—Comment, Madame, vous avez osé nous faire la guerre. La Reine repliqua que c'était la fausse gloire de Frederic de faire penser que la Prusse pouvait se soutenir contre la France.*'

" Talleyrand disant à Bonaparte que la Reine avait très bien répondu, Bonaparte lui dit Si cela est, vous ferez mieux de ne pas retirer la réponse."

Minney wrote to George describing Brighton at the New Year (December 31, 1830) :

" I write one little line to tell you that instead of the roads being bad and requiring four horses we arrived here at seven after remaining an hour at dinner at Crawley. The Ducks are quite well and Marianne and I have the house to ourselves very comfortably as Mama is dining at the Pavilion where she is particularly desired to remain to see the New Year in, so I suppose she will wait to be kissed and I shall not see her tonight. She writes full of regrets at not being at home imagining you are come too."



## Mrs Fitzherbert

Mrs Fitzherbert recovered her ancient glory at Brighton. Mary Frampton wrote in her Diary (February 8, 1831):

"The magnificence of the parties given by the King and Queen at the Pavilion are spoken of as realizing the ideas of the entertainments described in the Arabian Nights. . . . The King consults Mrs Fitzherbert much as an old friend in matters relating to the fêtes. . . . Mr Humphrey Weld told me that he had seen the certificate of Mrs Fitzherbert's marriage to the late King when Prince of Wales and that since his death she talked openly of it."

Sir George Seymour always kept a careful Diary year by year. Many of his notes while staying with Mrs Fitzherbert are worth extracting:

"(January 1, 1831) Left Town in the Britska at 1/2 past 10. Our own horses to Sutton and posted from thence to Brighton. To Mrs Fitzherberts by 1/2 past 4.

"January 2. Mrs Fitzherbert unwell. The Damers and we dined at the Pavilion. The King not looking strong but in high spirits. His Majesty had got a false report of Soult being at the head of the French Government and prognosticating War in consequence.

"January 3. I had been to the King who sent for me about his Bills. The King said Meyer was a rogue. I perceived however that his usual good nature made this kind of information painful to him. The Belfasts and Lady Aldborough dined with Mrs Fitzherbert.

"January 4. Attended at the Pavilion where Dr Philpotts did homage as Bishop of Exeter. The King addressed the Bishop shortly repeating that he owed his advancement entirely to his excellent character and good conduct.

"January 6. Played whist late with Mrs Fitzherbert.

"January 7. The Tierneys etc dined with Mrs Fitzherbert who had a Party.

## Seymour's Diary

"January 14. Rode with the Harriers near the Devils Dyke where we met Prince Talleyrand.

"January 21. The King had a dinner of 64 military to meet the Duke of Wellington. The King got up after dinner and said: the King of England has no politics out of his closet but he has pleasure in proposing the health of the first Captain of the Age to some of those who form a part of the bravest army in the world. The Duke received the compliment in respectful silence in which he shewed good taste. A subject should receive a compliment from his Sovereign as a son from a father. Prince Leopold carried the doctrine further as he told Lady Aldborough, who had been excluded from the Pavilion, that she ought to go if asked on any future occasions as the slights of Royalty should be no more resented than those of a parent.

"January 24. Gurwood came to Mrs Fitzherberts.

"(January 26, 1831) walked with Sir Herbert Taylor to Kemp Town. Mrs Fitzherbert had a very nice childrens Ball when little Blanche<sup>1</sup> made her debut.

"Mrs Fitzherbert showed me a Certificate dated December 15, 1785 and a Will of 24 sides of letter-paper with four Codicils signed and sealed by the Prince written in his own hand, but without any witnesses signatures dated January 10, 1796.

"January 27. Played whist in the evening with Mrs Fitzherbert.

"February 11. London. At 9.30 Set off with Posters to Brighton by 3. Waited on the King with the annual accounts. Dined at the Pavilion.

"The King asked me what was going on in Town. The King said it must be acknowledged the Foreign Affairs of the present Government had been well managed.

"He then asked if I heard of the Duke of Wellington being very violent which he had been informed was the case. I said I had no means of judging but I had

<sup>1</sup> Lady Blanche Haygarth, Minney's second daughter, died in 1916.

## Mrs Fitzherbert

heard that he was not: at which His Majesty expressed his satisfaction. I added that I did not mean to say the Duke did not retain his opinions as to the dangers of the Reform Bill.

"The King replied: you must know I myself was against Reform for many years—the Page brought in Candles which interrupted him but he added something afterwards which expressed that He contemplated the possibility of a change of Government if the Bill was lost in the Lords but said we must recollect Lord Grey was long committed to Reform.

"I replied to some Reform certainly and added that if the Government chose to conciliate the Peers by making concessions they might easily get a Majority on the Second Reading.

"The King asked if I knew that to be the case as if He had been told the House was perfectly intractable upon every Iota of Reform which I have no doubt his Ministers tell him.

"February 12. Dined at the Pavilion with Mrs Fitzherbert.

"April 14. Division at 7 a.m. Saw the King at St James. The King asked me if I had stayed till the end last night and was tired. I said so but that I was astonished to see Lord Grey below looking fresh.

"He replied by an allusion to the fact of Malefactors who knew their fate was fixed sleeping the night before their Execution as it dispelled the uncertainty which in all cases makes the greatest Torment, an odd allusion to a supposed favorite Minister."

While George Damer was at his Irish Election, Minney wrote (May 17, 1831):

"If poor Lord Donoughmore is to die, one cannot help wishing it might be when you were on the spot. I was told last night his life must be in great jeopardy, for I wished you to succeed Mr Hutchinson and everything I wished always happened. . . . The Glengalls personal animosity to the Hutchinsons would have made them satisfied had you come in on any terms. I

## Prince Leopold Annoyed

cannot help being amused at Mama's little vanity about it. She talks so big of your success and arranges the whole thing *à sa manière tort et à travers*. However her auditors do not know better. She is so gay. Today she dines at the Fremantles to meet the Landgravine and she is bent on going to the Opera to see Taglioni and has engaged a box with Lady Guildford. . . . Last night I chaperoned Mademoiselle d'Este<sup>1</sup> at Devonshire House Concert which was much less good than Leopold's as Walesky's<sup>2</sup> described *l'impression vous restait d'avoir causé longtemps avec un ennuyeux*. . . . I am told Prince Leopold is much annoyed at the King giving the new Earl<sup>3</sup> the Royal Livery."

(May 21, 1831) "Yesterday I went late to the Opera more to see Mama there, who went with Lady Guildford, than from any other motive. Her enthusiasm about both Taglioni and Pasta was quite amusing. It was the *Medea* and Mama fancied a resemblance between one of the children and little Minney and was so affected at the moment that I hear she cried like a child at the idea of their being murdered. Today she dines with me *tête-à-tête*."

(May 23, 1831) "Yesterday I dined in Tilney St where I met the Jerninghams, Smythes, Mr Bruce and Mr Weld. His reforming ideas do not suit Mama, who though she has no opinion, is I see in her heart very anti-Reformish. . . . Poor d'Este is gone abroad very ill. I think he must feel pretty hurt that Lord Grey, the Duke of Sussex' friend, should not have done something for him, when he has been making Lords and Ladies of the FitzClarences."

(May 25, 1831) "Minney was at the Ball. I saw nothing of His Majesty but the Queen was very amiable and introduced me to her sister who recollected little Minney's animation and figure at Lady Ravensworth's breakfast two years ago. At last I

<sup>1</sup> Daughter of the Duke of Sussex and Lady Augusta Murray.

<sup>2</sup> Illegitimate son of the Emperor Napoleon.

<sup>3</sup> Earl of Munster.

## Mrs Fitzherbert

lost her and found that for want of a more commodious seat she had popped herself under the railings and seated herself on the Throne, where by-the-by she would look very well, for I think her much more distinguished looking than little Victoria. The Greys are going to Windsor for the Ascot Races. The King is to call on Mama. I fancy a mere gossiping visit but there is always something in the little attention. He sent her word by Munster to wear the Royal undress livery when she put off her mourning. . . . Today I dine at my brother George's where Mrs Fitzherbert also is to be. Tomorrow there is a concert at Lansdowne House and on Friday *Hernani* is to be acted by Miss Kemble at Bridgewater House."

"Mama got quite *tête montée* about your getting in yesterday and jumbled the whole thing so completely that I found she had told the Princesses she went to see yesterday, that you had beat O'Connell and that Wyse had resigned and last night she was quite provoked when I told her I had heard of Wyse's return. Saturday I dined and spent the evening quietly in Tilney St. . . . The dinner at Prince Leopold's was enormous but agreeable. Leopold was completely himself to me, so much so young Prince Lieven assured me you were very much to be pitied in consequence. I am just come from *la Reine Hortense* who is much to be pitied at the loss of her son."

"Only think of my dissipation last night at Devonshire House and there we stayed till three thirty as the Duke would make me dance the *Cotillon* with him. . . . There was a variety of opinions about Fitz-Clarence's Peerage generally unfavourable but however he is gazetted as Earl of Munster, Baron Tewkesbury, which latter title he chose from merely the circumstance of our having suggested it."

(June 3, 1831) "I have done nought except spending the evening in Tilney St, where Mama is looking as well as possible and wanted me to encourage her going tonight to Paganini's Concert which I prudently recommended her to postpone. I had a letter

## Party at Windsor

from FitzClarence today from Windsor to give me an account of the party which he states is heavy: that Lady Grey looks bored, that the King was much better received yesterday and that when Lord Grey was cheered and recognised, he with great good taste withdrew from popular demonstration and that the Jerseys dined there yesterday. What an awkward party though the King is right if he wishes to make no distinctions. Lord Worcester described the King speechifying and drinking Lord Grey's health but that the King did not waken from table till near one o'clock."

(June 8, 1831) " You never saw anyone so well as Mama in both looks and spirits. She has heard of a cheap house at Hampstead and is very keen about it and thinks it would be such a nice thing for the children in which I quite concur with her and if you should be in Parliament and consequently we remain the summer in London it would afford an agreeable manner of getting out of Town."

(October 15, 1831) " The King talked much of the state of Ireland and appears better satisfied with Stanley than with Lord Anglesey. He has a great desire to know Lord Hertford's opinions. I told him they were much led by Croker's which were desponding I thought even too much so.

" Charlotte Strachan told Horace it was settled she should marry Lord Henry Seymour<sup>1</sup> who was to be acknowledged in consequence and to have £100,000 with her from Lord Hertford. She did not know him but professes to be ready to marry any one for money. I cannot make out whether this is a lie of Lady Strachan's or an infamy."

By March 9, 1832 Sir George was in Town entertaining Munster. " His manner contradicted his intention of behaving better to the King." Michael Bruce and the Damers to dinner. " Mrs Fitzherbert was prevented

<sup>1</sup> Lord Henry was an illegitimate son of the third Lady Hertford, probably by Montrond.

## Mrs Fitzherbert

by the cold." But March 12, he met her dining with the Master of the Rolls. The well-known names of the period slip into every page. Alas, there is no Grevillian power of illuminating their gossip. "Cobbett using seditious language" in the House is followed by a late visit to Princess Lieven's Ball. On April 24, Sir George "went to the King with Mrs Fitzherbert's letter about Colonel Damer." On May 17 "went to see the Duke of Orleans review the Guards in the Park on horseback. Saw Mrs Fitzherbert and Minney's fine boy."<sup>1</sup>

The Reform Bill so dreaded by all her circle was beginning to bear its fruits. Sir George recorded that "Lord Seagrave and the Berkeleys three of them got into Parliament on Reform Principles, see and dread the dangers they have produced. The former laments Close Boroughs.<sup>2</sup> The latter are almost Tories already."

May 24, must have had an interesting hour "when I played whist with Prince Talleyrand and Lord Granville." The gout did not prevent him dining on May 26, at St James's Palace, "the Duke of Brunswick and Mrs Fitzherbert are the only strangers. The Tyroler Family of peasants sang some air imitating Instruments particularly well."

He picked up a little information about Princess Victoria on May 29:

"Dr Kuper at St James. He knows the Royal Family well. I see he has no opinion of the Duchess of Kent's abilities or of her daughter's. From what he says the latter never sees those of her own associates and is educated as if her capacity was as remarkable as her own station." On June 17: "Lady Aldborough, Mrs Fitzherbert and the Meyricks dined here."

<sup>1</sup> Lionel, fourth Earl of Portarlington, born April 7, 1832.

<sup>2</sup> Polite term for Rotten Boroughs.

## The Elections

And the events of the season flowed past the same as a hundred years later. The Fourth of June at Eton was described as "Surly Hall Eton fête." Ascot Races and a Levee followed with "two stout Wurtemberg Princes in the Russian Guard present." As for the Queen's Drawing Room "Horace observed the women were so ugly he wondered the Horses did not refuse to draw them there." Sir George recorded a number of Mrs Fitzherbert's social engagements. Names and dates and no more float down the ages. Her own invitations disappeared unless such and such a one passed into Minney's Autograph Book. A surviving note from "Vassall Holland"<sup>1</sup> shows that she made her peace with Holland House. He wrote:

"I mentioned to Lady Holland that you had *dosed* a little at Lady Petre's and we drew an inference therefrom that you might be persuaded to dine out. If you would honour our little dining room with your company you would gratify us exceedingly."

While George Damer was struggling with his Irish Elections Minney wrote to him most days.

Gorhambury (December 7, 1832)

"I have passed a very agreeable visit here of 36 hours, found the Duke of Wellington here. He was quite charming, in good looks but I think not able to conceal lowness of spirits as regards politics. Lady Verulam was talking to him of her anxiety about Lord Grimston's Election. He answered: Have you done all you can? I think so. Can you think of anything you have neglected on the subject? No. There is nothing more required of you and leave it in the hands of Providence.

"He is gone to look after Lord Douro's Election. *En revanche* he is so taken with the idea of the *tableaux*, he has chosen the scenes and undertaken Wilkie doing sketches for us all. You are to be

<sup>1</sup> The third Lord Holland (1773-1840).



## Mrs Fitzherbert

Villiers Duke of Buckingham. . . . We played Blind Hookey and I quite regretted that in looking after one shillings, one attention was diverted from the Duke whose bad luck was quite singular for he lost nearly as many pounds as we shillings. Tell Lord Portarlington (and you may quote the Duke of Wellington) that if he does not with his peculiar advantages bring in his brother a Member, it will be the most humiliating defeat that can be sustained by a nobleman."

Brighton (December 12, 1832)

"I got here last night, finding poor Mama on her sofa but so weak she could hardly speak to me, but today she is much better . . . very torpid except with respect to your Election. She said she always had a misgiving about your brother's conduct. However I am determined not to be disappointed and everybody I saw today, who inquired after you I assured you were *beating*. I saw the Queen and a great cavalcade, Horace looking the Equerry. . . . I left poor Lady Clare dreading a duel of R. Fitzgibbon with his opponent who in the Paper charges him with deliberate falsehood. I hope the friends will settle it without pistol intervention."

Brighton (December 14, 1832)

"I think her a little better today but still very weak but I think we can judge by her spirits, and her mind is so alive and yet free from excitement. I have dined at home and alone every day as she gets up at seven and sits up till eleven. She saw Sir Henry Halford yesterday. He came down to the Duchess of Gloucester, about whom I fear he has a bad opinion, and Horace says the King is very low about her. I have not yet written my name at the Pavilion. . . . Lord Frederic was opposed by a mad man who got 300 votes with a long beard, in purple silk and his servant in a yellow domino. So much for the Nineteenth Century!"

## Life at Brighton

Brighton (December 26, 1832)

"I am sorry to say that Mama is not quite so well today. I hope only owing to weakness as Price says she has no real disease and that her pulse is good but she talks of never recovering. I did not tell her of your landing at Bristol for she would be expecting you sooner, and as I have always announced you for the 30th I think it is better that you should not come before that. I believe *Election* might be found as deeply engraven on my heart as Calais on Queen Mary's.

"I dined at the Pavilion on Friday. The King (Old Goose in high spirits) did not know who stood for Sussex. I fear you may not find Mama out of her room. I think now indolence confines Mama more than illness to her bed."

"I was cruelly disappointed at finding you did not arrive till New Years day and I thought Mama so unkind to be hurt at your delay that I have represented you gouty so remember and keep up to my assertions. Poor dear Mama is terribly languid and I fear desponding about her state I think in addition to her anxiety for me to have you back, the King coming made her feel we would have so little time to ourselves, *mais n'importe*. . . . I talked of your gout till I expect to see you lame! "

Sir George travelled down to Brighton on January 9, of the New Year 1833. His driving time is recorded:

"Set off in the Britska at 10½ from Hampton Court: to the Pavilion by 4. Saw the King and called on Mrs Fitzherbert who is confined to her room. Count Pozzo de Borgo and a party of 50 dined at the Pavilion. The Damers dined with the King the next evening."

On August 23, he "called on Mrs Fitzherbert who went to the King at St James." On August 27 he attended the National School Committee "when I recommended Mrs Fitzherbert's Steward (Baker)."

## Mrs Fitzherbert

On the following day he called on Mrs Fitzherbert who was ill in bed, but he recorded her conversation :

"Mrs Fitzherbert acquainted me she was very happy and had a load taken from her mind by having arranged the future disposition of her papers as follows: that with the King's assistance Sir William Knighton had been obliged to pin the Duke of Wellington the late King's other Executor to give up that portion of them belonging to the late King. That these with all her correspondence with him except five or six material documents had been burnt in her presence by the Duke of Wellington, Lord Albemarle and Lord Stourton, the last being her relation. That these five other documents had been sealed and deposited at her Bankers with a label saying they were only to be opened should the said three Trustees think it essential to produce them if her character was assailed in future.

"I agreed with her that these Individuals from the goodness of their character and their Interests and Politics being so separate were well chosen and she desired me to thank Lord Albemarle again for the part he had taken in the transaction.

"On my doing so, Lord Albemarle confirmed her account in the evening at St James' except that he said the Envelope writing placed the opening of the Papers at the unqualified discretion of the Persons herein named, although there was an understanding between them and Mrs Fitzherbert to the effect she had stated to me.

"He hoped, he said, it might be considered certain they would not be opened. He recapitulated the contents of the Packet at the Bankers as Mrs Fitzherbert had also done as

1. The Will I saw in 1831 of January 1796.
2. The Certificate of the Marriage December 15, 1785.
3. A letter from the Clergyman who celebrated it.
4. A Letter from George the Fourth when Prince of Wales to her acknowledging it.

## The Papers Burnt

### 5. The Deed settling or Mortgaging the Pavilion at Brighton to her.

"I said I was happy this was arranged, as she had once talked of giving me the bequest or rather the care of her Papers at her death, which I should have found an embarrassing charge. Lord Albemarle said he had also found it an awkward affair to be engaged in from his friendship with Fox and the Prince's declaration to the latter that he had never married Mrs Fitzherbert.

"The latter had told me Knighton had tried to the utmost to get her Papers, into his own power."<sup>1</sup>

Mrs Fitzherbert made Colonel Gurwood a confidant of this important scene in her life. The King himself took a keen interest in safeguarding her wishes and Knighton was pushed into the background. The King invited her to dine on the actual day that the papers were to be burnt. "I have been commanded by the King," Lord Albemarle wrote to Lord Stourton, "to invite Mrs Fitzherbert to dine with him on Saturday the 24th, and also Your Lordship to meet her on that day." Lord Stourton was not well enough to come to London on that occasion. After the papers were burnt, she wrote to Gurwood (August 24, 1833):

"Wellington and Lord Albemarle have just left me and, thank God, my mind is relieved by having all the papers except some particular ones committed to the flames. Nothing can have been more kind in every respect than your friend the Duke and we are again good friends and he is perfectly satisfied with all that has been done and taken the whole responsibility upon himself without Knighton's interference. The King I was with yesterday. He was kind and affectionate to the greatest degree and insisted upon my returning to join him at Brighton the end of October."<sup>2</sup>

Colonel John Gurwood figured during the last decade of Mrs Fitzherbert's life. An explanation of

<sup>1</sup> *Ragley Papers.*

<sup>2</sup> *Fitzherbert Papers, II.*

## Mrs Fitzherbert

their friendship appears in *A Romance of the Nineteenth Century* by C. H. Dudley Ward, a book based on the Esher Papers :

"She had in common with Gurwood ideas on honourable conduct which brought her a similar satisfaction; like Gurwood she drew comfort from self-deception. By a quaint twist of the mind she considered herself a wronged woman; Gurwood considered himself a wronged man. He condoled with her and expressed his deep sympathy and respectful devotion; she, flattered and pleased, condescended, as a Great Lady to condole with him. They had much in common."

Whatever were the reasons, they became close friends, and it was through Gurwood that so many of Mrs Fitzherbert's Papers descended to Lord Esher, the first Lord of the name having married Gurwood's step-daughter. No doubt he was an officer with a grievance. He had led the Forlorn Hope at Ciudad Rodrigo, and had never received the promotion he hoped. Mrs Fitzherbert supported him warmly with the Duke of York who wrote at one moment that "the good conduct and professional merits of your friend Gurwood have alone procured my good will and approbation and his wishes shall be speedily gratified."

Unfortunately they never were, and Gurwood became a pest to his friends and patrons until the Duke of Wellington conceived the happy idea of keeping him quiet by giving him his Despatches to edit. Mrs Fitzherbert wrote giving him advice on his love affairs as well as on others. When Gurwood was in Paris she wrote him her conversation with the Duke of York (December 27, 1825). The Duke had complained to her "I don't understand what Gurwood means. He asked me to leave for two years absence, comes back at the end of a few months and then takes himself off to Paris." The reason was that he was trying to marry a

## Sir Richard Wallace

pretty adventuress, Fanny Mayer. But it was while in Paris that he rescued and restored to the Hertford family the mysterious boy who became Sir Richard Wallace, and who was accredited as a son to the fourth Lord Hertford, whom Mrs Fitzherbert was alluding to in the same letter "suggesting he should return and live in old Dorchester House unless he would allow her to have it."

"Pray say *mille choses* from me to Beauchamp, and tell him I wish he would come and be my neighbour, for it is very wrong, if he is determined not to come here, to be the dog in the manger, neither to live in his house or let anyone profit by it. You know I have been a long time wishing to have it and as it is no use to him he had better let me have it, and that I would make any arrangement that was pleasing and satisfactory to him. I don't think Beauchamp could have much satisfaction here. His father is such a strange person. I don't think there is a man in England so unpopular."

Mrs Fitzherbert was not on very good terms with all her family. Of her brethren, Jack and Wat were dead. The Brambridge estate had gone to brother Charles, who refused to pay any of the moneys due to Mrs Wat and her daughters. This was a sore subject to Mrs Fitzherbert whose letters on Charles grew distracted, especially as she and her sister Lady Haggerston, had long before signed away their rights to the estate in favour of Mrs Wat and daughters, together with some colliery property in the North.

Mr Wilkins says that of Charles and Harry Smythe nothing was known. Little indeed save their mention in Colonel Gurwood's letters. Mrs Fitzherbert confided in him to arrange affairs with these relations. Charles appears to have lived misanthropically. He quarrelled with everybody possible, and relieved his misery and loneliness by playing whist with Harry

## Mrs Fitzherbert

Smythe, with Caroline McNotty, his daughter, and the housekeeper. When Harry could stand him no longer and went, he was reduced to playing dummy whist. And with this pitiable picture his life drew to a close. Mrs Fitzherbert despatched the faithful Gurwood to the funeral, whence he reported that the estate of £50,000 had been left in trust to Mrs Fitzherbert and Maryanne Jerningham as executors until Emma McNotty, a grandchild of ten, reached the age of twenty-one. It was then to be divided between Caroline and Emma, but should they die or Emma marry without the consent of Mrs Fitzherbert the whole Capital would devolve on Maryanne.

So Gurwood acquainted "a certain Marianne Jerningham" with humorous congratulations (February 6, 1833).

Before Charles died, he expressed a wish to reconcile Mrs Fitzherbert with Lady Haggerston. For eighteen years they had not met nor spoken. Their disagreement was caused by the usual source of domestic strife, money. Lady Haggerston died in 1836, but there is no record that the sisters gave each other the kiss of peace before they reached the grave.

Brother Harry was left only £50 a year to his acute disappointment, and had to depend upon his relatives for support. Mrs Fitzherbert helped him to secure a small position later. She wrote to Maryanne (October 2, 1836):

"I am sure you will be glad to hear I have at last persuaded Harry Smythe to accept a most excellent situation with a Salary of £200 per ann. He seems delighted with it, as the fair Lady he wanted to marry has constantly refused his offers. He has been nearly four years trying what *his beautiful appearance* would do and has unfortunately found no one so in love with him as he is with himself. I hope however he will do well. It is a situation many have been anxious to

## The Wedding Ring

obtain. Lord Munster has been kind enough to give it to me."<sup>1</sup>

Before she died Lady Haggerston gave some interesting relics to her friend Lady Mount Edgcumbe, which have survived.

A gold locket with the Prince of Wales' feathers and a ring with the note that :

"This ring was given by Lady Haggerston to my dear wife, being that with which the Prince of Wales wedded her sister Mrs Fitzherbert."

Also: "A lock of the Prince of Wales' hair, long in the possession of Mrs Fitzherbert who gave it to Lady Haggerston who gave it to my mother. M. E."

This ring which was probably the ring borrowed from the Duchess of Devonshire to perform the mock ceremony at Carlton House (July 8, 1784) is now preserved in the collections at Windsor.

The ring with which the Prince wedded Mrs Fitzherbert on December 15, 1785 remained on her finger until her death, after which it passed into the possession of the Dawson-Damer family. In 1853 it was on loan in the South Kensington Museum. According to the authors of *Old and New London*:

"Captain Dawson-Damer lent a curious set of records from the hand of Cosway of an ill-fated and ill-requited attachment—portraits of Mrs Fitzherbert and the Prince Regent and the wedding ring of the former with the name GEORGE AUGUSTUS FREDERICK engraved within the hoop."

<sup>1</sup> *Swynnerton Papers*.



## CHAPTER XIII

She that was ever fair and never proud ;  
Had tongue at will and yet was never loud.  
Never lacked gold and yet went never gay,  
Fled from her wish and yet said—*now I may !*  
She that, being angered, her revenge being nigh  
Bade her wrong stay and her displeasure fly :  
She that in wisdom never was so frail,  
*To change the cod's head for the salmon's tail.*

SHAKESPEARE (*Othello*).

IN September, 1833, Mrs Fitzherbert went to Aix-la-Chapelle and returned to England in August of the following year. Lady Dorothy Eyre wrote to Minney (July 26, 1833):

"I hear that Mrs Fitzherbert is going escorted by the *Captain* to meet you at Aix la Chapelle. I fear you will then all winter in Paris."

The Captain was Minney's brother, George, who had become so devoted to Mrs Fitzherbert in her last years and who was the first friend to whom she showed her marriage papers. Another good new friend was Colonel Gurwood, the Duke of Wellington's Secretary.

We have a glimpse of Mrs Fitzherbert's Paris visit in 1833-4. Lady Warrender wrote to Gurwood:

"I saw Mrs Fitzherbert at the Embassy and her manner to me was, as it has always been, most kind. I was surprised to see her so little changed in the ten years which have passed since you and I used to meet so often at her fireside. I cannot say so much for Mrs Damer's looks, her excessive thinness is not becoming to her. The Cadogans have spent the winter in Paris. Do you remember all the *tracasseries* which the Lady Cadogan occasioned to Minnie in 1823? I do not think I could so completely have forgiven, or at least have forgotten them as Minnie seems to have done."

## Life in Paris

Minney accompanied Mrs Fitzherbert to Paris and her letters franked by the Ambassador, Lord Granville, gave her husband an account of their life :

(December 2, 1833) “. . . I will take up my little Journal from Friday. I dined with Lady Jersey at Mama's and we went afterwards to the Opera where Mama was delighted with the *Silphade*, but so knocked up with its length she has hardly yet recovered it. Sunday I dined with Mama who had the Ellices, Donkins and Turenne and an agreeable little dinner.”

Minney remained in attendance and wrote to George later :

“ I do not believe that since this time last year I have spent such a disagreeable three days. Mama has had a regular fit of gout which had she submitted to patiently would have done her good. . . . However last night I left her a little less [     ]. She certainly does not suffer as much as she says. I wish Mrs Wat would comply with Mama's invitation to come over with you. She is dying to have her and evidently wants someone in the house with her. I am sure it is essential for our general comfort she should have a companion here. I have been obliged to make her excuse for a dinner at the Tuileries tomorrow. Luckily for me Lady Granville takes me. It is odd that she does not like people to know she has the gout and begs I will not publish it in England. Mama lately receives no one. She lies actually in her bedroom.”

(December 13, 1833) “ By the by, dinner at the Tuileries was very dull. I was handed by Mr Nullerton and sat between him and a Dame d'Atraes, who would not even help me to salt. However they<sup>1</sup> were very civil to me and full of regrets at Mama's non appearance who, by the by, though still lame, is quite recovered temper thank Goodness. . . . Lord Hertford I hear is a perfect skeleton and says he hopes he shall be allowed to die in peace. He is disgusted with Lady

<sup>1</sup> The King and the Queen of the French.

## Mrs Fitzherbert

Strachan,<sup>1</sup> but so completely under her dominion that even his letters are intercepted. Mama has seen Beauchamp, who did not seem to know as much as this but she thought he felt in a false position and I hope to meet him tonight to tell him what I have heard . . . that Lord Hertford has few months to live and Lady Strachan talks of it with interest. What an infamous woman! All this looks like the caricature of the poor King's death. Bad as Lady Conyngham I think, being less unprincipled though as grasping. . . ."

(December 16, 1833) "Mama's gout is better but I was so alarmed by her having spasms which upon attacking her caused her gout to disappear at once. Would not see Chermiside, however dosed herself with opium and thank God is well again. There never was such a constitution! I sat with her last Sunday in the dark bedroom, for she had not got out of her bed for 48 hours. She was very amusing about her younger days and told me it was the 48th anniversary of her marriage with the King December 15, 1785. She says she is not at home and will not allow she is ill to those who call. She desires me to ask you to do what you can in urging Mrs Wat to come over and thinks, much as she wishes your return, you could put it off for a little to escort her. I know she will be gratified at Mama talking of her as her last relation and thinking that she and herself from their widowed position ought to cling together. . . . Munster has written me an unlikely low letter telling me that all the world tramples on him and that he heard you complained of his not having dined you and that you ought to have known that not inclinations but his wife's aversion to Society was the cause of this. He adds that he envies our having back our house for three years. He must be mad but alas his insanity only poisons his own existence! . . .

"There is a ridiculous report that has reached

<sup>1</sup> Grownow gives the story of this adventuress. Brought up a pretty foundling, she became a lady's maid and as "Clothilde" won the successive admiration of Admiral Sir Richard Strachan, the Duke of Clarence, and the third Marquess of Hertford.

## A Title Suggested

Mama's ears of the King's intention to prove to the world his respect and feelings towards Mama, that as she never would accept a Title, to make me for her sake a Baroness in my own right to descend to my son, and this because Mama had no male relation and that I was in consequence nearest to her as the adopted child of the late King and herself. . . . Mama is evidently tickled on the subject though she says Titles are nothing and money is what he ought to give. She says the King told her he should give an early proof of this distinction which is the only thing on which she could ground this report, which I trace to vulgar sources, but I wish this could be conveyed to the King for it might put it into his head and I am sure would gratify Mama more than she will allow, for she was evidently disappointed at your not mentioning this report. She has taken up an idea that the Pavilion, as the King's Will does not say who it is to go to, may belong to her. In short she evidently is occupied by thinking the King owes her a great deal and thinking how she is to assert her claims. This however may not last. Do not tell the Smythes or any people breathe all this about me. You may send this to Munster, for he alone understands the positions of the parties. I only wish his own interest and happiness was commensurate with his wishes for that of his friends. . . . I had an interview with Beauchamp and told him I fancy more than he knew and the result was that he assured me he should hold himself ready to start for Naples, but he is so touchy and suspicious about his movements being known, I was obliged to promise him I would not mention our conversation. It is sad to see a mind of 33 endowed like his so warped by bad education and neglect, for he said to me: How can I forgive my father having neglected me."

Harriet Countess Granville informed the Duke of Devonshire from Paris (December 3, 1833):

" Old Fitz is put out because Waleska will dine with

## Mrs Fitzherbert

her at her hotel where she has no cook. Mrs Damer is so flustered and hysterical with the universal hubbub that she invited a party to Fitz two days ago. Granville amongst the number went and found Fitz was gone to the Opera and nobody at home."

And later (January 23, 1834):

"Mrs Fitzherbert plays about, dined here last Friday and at 12 was still to be seen sitting on a couch between Pozzo di Borgo and Sir Sidney Smith."

Pozzo di Borgo was a well-known Diplomatist of the time, a Corsican employed by the Russian Emperor against the great Corsican. Sir Sidney Smith was the heroic defender of Acre. A lock of his hair with a whimsical letter survives in Minney's autograph book. Minney made an interesting "Delilah" collection as well as of the handwritings of distinguished friends. The following was the Duke of Wellington's answer to her request (September 10, 1834):

"You desired some time ago that I would give you a lock of my hair. I would not give you any of the grey colour, but I desired the man who cuts my hair to select some of the natural colour and I send you the produce of his labours. When do you intend to come back to us? Remember me most kindly to Mrs Fitzherbert if you should be with her and believe me ever yours most sincerely Wellington."<sup>1</sup>

With the New Year she received Brighton news from the Princess Augusta, who reported the Downshires settled in Mrs Fitzherbert's house, which she had been able to let for the winter. The Princess wrote (January 1, 1834):

"I am rejoiced to give you very favourable reports of dearest William's and the Queen's health. They are both very much obliged to you for your kind message and beg you to be assured of their very sincere regard

<sup>1</sup> *Mrs Dawson-Damer's Autograph Book.*

## The Citizen King

and affection *for your excellent self*. . . . Brighton is just now very gay with Christmas entertainments and Balls. I have seen nothing of that sort but my sister Mary and the King have been with me today after their drive."

Mrs Fitzherbert's absence from Brighton was deplored in the homes of the poor and the tradesmen and not least in the Pavilion.

Mrs Fitzherbert had taken a small apartment in Paris, where the Duke of Orleans immediately visited her on behalf of King Louis Philippe and his Queen. She declined to attend any of the Court parties, but consented (so she told Lord Stourton) to join the French Royal Family "every evening, whenever I like it, in a quiet family way, which suits me very much." She found the Citizen King very much attached to England and hopeful of continued friendship. It was just as well if Mrs Fitzherbert could offer the olive-branch, for the English King had recently made one of his ridiculous after-dinner speeches threatening to keep his eye on the Citizen King aforesaid and calling on his listeners to sharpen their swords!

In August Mrs Fitzherbert returned to England. King George IV's birthday was now "a melancholy and memorable recollection" and as she wrote to Minney (August 22, 1834):

"Alas, *mes beaux jours sont passés* and I must make up my mind to my arm-chair and my fireside I am not fit for anything else."

As soon as she reached England, the King sent for her and gave her a handsome present which he said he had purposely had made for her. After a visit to her nieces, Lady Bathurst and Mrs Craven, she settled at Brighton for the winter. Nobody was better placed to soothe the relations between the Kings of England and France, for she was in the unique position of being welcome to the private homes of each.

## Mrs Fitzherbert

Mrs Fitzherbert sank into complete retirement. Her interests shrank into a little area, but she remained the most wonderful figure of the past Brighton. The Beaux and Dandies had passed away with the Regency, but Brighton was still Mayfair-by-the-Sea. Between Tilney St. and the Steyne there was no great gulf fixed. The same fashionable folk made Park Lane and the Marine Parade as one.

The Regency was liquidating its last memories. Private exuberances had passed into more general pleasures. Broken Beaux sometimes lifted their faded faces into the saline air. Even more faded Beauties haunted the places where their beauty had died. Mrs Fitzherbert never made the least attempt to upholster "the voluptuous charms" of which Macaulay wrote. A pot of rouge conveyed by Minney from Paris was the most she attempted, unlike the much-painted Lady Aldborough who retained the coarse speech of the Eighteenth Century and "died as she had lived," so Beauchamp reported from Paris, "with a rose in her wig!"

The camp-followers of the Prince Regent had been ruined and dispersed. Moira had taken India to revive his finances. Sheridan and Brummell had long gone under. MacMahon had died miserably of drink and Knighton had taken to religion. When Lady Knighton published Knighton's Memoirs, Sir George Seymour noted they were "full of professions of virtue and religious feeling which one hopes to be honest." Bloomfield had been dismissed as suddenly as he had been taken on. He went into Diplomacy and acquired as much influence on Bernadotte in Sweden as once upon the Prince Regent.

From exile Beau Brummell never ceased to ply his friends, including George Damer, for help. His letters used to arrive at Tilney Street facetiously sub-addressed "Port Lane." He hinted in one that Alvanley had

## A Bad Shot

sent him £50 but Albanley himself took considerable loans from Damer who became involved in consequence.

To add to Mrs Fitzherbert's political distractions George Damer became involved in the duel which Albanley fought with O'Connell's son. The great Daniel may have been the champion of the Catholic religion, but English Catholics regarded him with an aversion in which Mrs Fitzherbert shared. O'Connell called Albanley "a bloated buffoon" in the House of Commons and was immediately challenged with George Damer as second. The excitement in Tilney St. can be imagined and Minney was reassured that her husband underwent no positive danger. The letters dealing with the duel survive in the *Portarlington Papers*, including O'Connell's letter declining to fight on religious grounds. His son Morgan took his place on May 4, 1835, on Wimbledon Common. Several shots were fired ineffectively, but Albanley's bonmots on the occasion became famous and were eagerly retailed at Tilney St and thence to the world.

On the way to Wimbledon Damer tried to cheer Albanley up by saying that the world was indebted to him for his action. "The world indebted to me?" answered Albanley "I am devilishly glad to hear it, for then the world and I are quits!"

When O'Connell missed him, Albanley said to Damer, "What a bad shot he is, not to be able to hit any one as fat as I am!"

On his return to London he gave the hackney coachman a sovereign as he explained "not for taking me to Wimbledon, but for bringing me back."

Albanley was a constant visitor at Mrs Fitzherbert's who was not aware of the many thousands that George had lent him. Later in the 'forties, Minney invited Albanley and the Prince Louis Napoleon to Came. It was then that the future Emperor boasted that he



## Mrs Fitzherbert

would become Emperor and one day drive Austria out of Italy. George Damer said he was "mad as a hatter" and would not allow him to marry the little Georgiana when she grew up.

But these were days long after Mrs Fitzherbert's death. It is interesting to find all her letters to George Damer stored away with Daniel O'Connell's and with Louis Napoleon's to Minney.

In a sense she relived life in Minney and George, sharing friendships and correspondences. Lord Munster's endless missives, some of historical interest, were intended equally for the ladies of Tilney St. No doubt the Damers brought her word of the interesting Parties they attended as for instance after dining at the Clanricardes (December 15, 1834) where they heard Talleyrand and Brougham (in bad French) discussing Fox. Talleyrand thought that Fox had had an affair with Mrs Siddons which Brougham wittily compared to a love affair with the Ocean!

Mrs Fitzherbert, Minney, and George Damer had become a devoted trio always anxious in the absence of one or the other. The two women were engrossed in George's political career. After some struggles he had won his seat in Tipperary. This gave him the privilege of franking letters and Minney wrote tearfully in her joy:

"You may imagine how charmed I was to receive your letter and I believe that my eyes rained like the weather on reading your speech. Though I long to see my darling M.P. yet I hardly wish you to be in town before the 24th as I must pay my promised visit to Hampton Court and Mrs Fitzherbert never having forgiven Mrs George Seymour for not thinking you an Adonis insists on my going to see her without you and not to be at home to receive you would be too hard upon me. The whole house was upset by your Frank, and Sarah assured me she could not light the fire she

## Journeys Suggested

was so nervous with joy. Anderson was eloquent and not tipsy. I have not seen Mama but expect her to be charmed."

At one time the Damers thought of going to Russia with Minney's uncle.

"You see Lord Hertford goes to Russia. Would you like him to propose accompanying him? I said if you were to agree. Copley said last night at White's that, as some one of the Household must go with him to present the Garter, he supposed Lady Strachan would go as *Rouge Dragon!*"

At another time there was the exciting prospect of accompanying Munster to India, if he were given the command there. In the end George was made a Privy Councillor, but no more. Minney wished him to enter the Cabinet and take the Colonies. She wrote in 1835:

"So many places are empty, I really think if you were on the spot you might have a chance by speaking to Lord Rosslyn or through Punch or Lord Alvanley to the Duke. I could not speak to Lord Rosslyn unless to ask something as definite as the Colonies. . . . A propos our Coachman has no Box Coat and we all look beggarly. Shall I order any liveries? Mama thought I was very spiritless in not doing so and says she is ashamed of my equipage. She borrowed it yesterday as her carriage is quite knocked up."

(November 19, 1835) "I suppose by your letter Lord Alvanley has not left London. However I have nothing to say to him beyond what you have told me and I think we had better rest on our oars and say nothing. I shall not now to Mama. I dined with Mama yesterday and have spent both Sat and Sunday evening with her. Lady Donkin thinks that if the objection of his wife could be removed Sir George Murray would be sent to India."

Amid the elections Minney described a dinner with

## Mrs Fitzherbert

Sydney Smith the wit and the two Greville Diarists and De Ros the card-sharper :

"The tone of opposed politics came in good state. I have just got a charming letter from Lady Georgiana Grey saying that in spite of politics they cant but wish for you and wish Sir Robert Peel's Government might turn out such as Papa may support. . . . Alava is arrived and gone to Brighton today but sent me word I am to meet him at dinner tomorrow at Lord Sefton's. In short the world is always more amiable to me than I deserve."

A close and cheering friend was Sir Henry Halford, who always attended on Mrs Fitzherbert when she was in Town. Before returning to Brighton she wrote to him :

"I have made up my mind to go to Brighton on Thursday, provided I am able to do so and that the weather will permit me. I do not like to torment you, but I should be quite unhappy not to see you for a moment before I go. The chief reason of going is that the Pavilion<sup>1</sup> go to Town, not to return on the 18th and I wish to see them and I shall be thought very ungrateful not to pay my duty, having delayed it so long. If therefor you could at any time in the day or evening call, I shall be delighted in person to thank you 1000 times for all your kindness and attention to me, which is deeply impressed upon my heart and mind."

Minney wrote from Brighton :

"I feel already the better for the change of air. Mama is equally pleased with her Terrace Hotel. She has had Sir George Talbot sitting with her all the evening. She says Gurwood could come down with you and dine with her tomorrow."

High in Royal Favour she cared to exert her influence very little. The Duke of Wellington was right in

<sup>1</sup> King William and Queen Adelaide.

## Chantrey's Statue

saying that she was never an interested woman. There is no trace of jobbing in her papers or in the papers of others.

Surrounded with friends, venerated by her neighbours, and cherished by George and Minney Damer, Mrs Fitzherbert watched the last sands of her eventful life trickling through the glass.

Hers was the simple life. Lady Downshire and Miss Jeffreys were always at her call and her beloved Mrs Mills had reached thirty years in her service. She drove out in a barouche behind slow horses, but attracting the salutes of Brightonians who recognised the Royal Livery worn by her footman.

From her house she could see the famous Chain Pier, a recent addition to the splendours of Brighton and when she cared to pace the Steyne, she passed by Chantrey's magnificent bronze statue of her third husband. It was appropriate for an Artist-King to be commemorated by so fine an artist.

The Steyne opened to the sea and carried its green levels beyond the town. In the midst of an enclosure surrounded by iron rails rose the newly cast statue of George IV. Subscriptions of £3000 had enabled its erection to be made in 1828, but the Monarch had never returned to Brighton to see himself on his nine-foot pedestal. But for years to come Mrs Fitzherbert could not leave her house without being reminded of her romance. On Sundays she became secluded and her friends saw her disappear in the direction of the Catholic Church.

The Catholic history of Brighton commenced with the advent of Mrs Fitzherbert. From her first house in Church St., subsequently destroyed, she had extended the privileges of her oratory to the handful of Catholics. Mass in Brighton used to depend on the presence of

## Mrs Fitzherbert

Mrs Fitzherbert's chaplain. After her case had been presented to Rome by the Vicar-General Douglass in 1800, a resident missionary priest reached the town. With the new century Mrs Fitzherbert occupied the house which was built for her on the Steyne. Here Mass was said in her private oratory and the faithful were permitted to attend. By 1808, a Catholic Chapel existed on the High Street, which survives to-day as a store-house. In 1835, thanks chiefly to the efforts of Mrs Fitzherbert, it was superseded by the Church of St John the Baptist, a building more Grecian than Gothic, but magnificent in the eyes of the newly emancipated. Mrs Fitzherbert donated £1000 and induced the Marquess of Bristol to give the ground. It was also at her suggestion that Lord Egremont gave the sculptured baptistery, the work of Carew, who ten years later made the monument of Mrs Fitzherbert herself.

Mrs Fitzherbert's relations with the Church were naturally radiant. It was only appropriate that, when her nephew by marriage was raised to the Cardinalate, he announced his elevation to her on the following day from Rome (March 16, 1830):

"I cannot suffer the post to go without informing you that in the Consistory held yesterday I had the honor of being associated to the College of Cardinals and afterwards received from the hands of the Pope the first marks of that dignity. I have thought it right, by the advice of my friends here to send a kind of official notification of the same through the Secretary for the Colonies, with whom I had had relations on the affairs of Canada; Lord Clifford will be able to tell you what has been done. In the meantime, I am sure your kindness will not be sorry that my destination has been changed. I hope you have not suffered from the severe winter, it has been comparatively mild here, tho' considered a hard one by the inhabitants. I am happy to say that my daughter's health

## Cardinal Weld

is much improved and that she is well enough to receive the visits of congratulation, which is rather a hard duty here, and must be my excuse for adding no more than how sincerely I am, my dear Madam, your obliged humble servant THOS. CARDINAL WELD."<sup>1</sup>

Cardinal Weld it should be mentioned was a widower and the picturesque scene was sometimes witnessed on the Pincio of the English Cardinal sheltering his grandchildren under his scarlet umbrella. In February, FitzClarence had met him and reported enthusiastically to Tilney St. Rosaries which FitzClarence had bought for Minney and Mrs Fitzherbert were taken by Dr Weld to be blessed by the Pope, Gregory XVI. FitzClarence wrote to Minney (February 12, 1830):

"Thus they were held for the purpose by the first English Cardinal we have had for 160 years since Cardinal Howard in James the Second's time. I dare say Mrs Fitzherbert never thought of being related to a Cardinal but so is the case, as you will before this have heard. I have become acquainted with His Eminence and think him a gentleman well suited for the position which is not without difficulties at this moment."<sup>2</sup>

The poor and the destitute in Brighton knew the extent of her charities. After her death Father Cullen wrote to Minney describing her charities in detail (June 27, 1837):

"I was fully authorized by her to contribute in her name to all our little charities. She usually headed the list in our collections and she regularly gave five pounds annually towards the support of the Charity School. Then came something for the clothing of the poor, for coals in the winter. The sick, the aged, the widow, the orphan were all helped by her. Easter was commonly the payday. The sums varied from fourteen to twenty pounds, sometimes more, rarely less.

<sup>1</sup> *Fitzherbert Papers*, III.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

## Mrs Fitzherbert

I recollect I received from her at the Easter of last year twenty pounds with a few additional pounds for the clothing of the little boy who served her Mass. At other seasons of the year for particular cases I received other sums, never under five pounds."<sup>1</sup>

Father Cullen was the devoted priest of St John the Baptist's, but Mrs Fitzherbert's private chaplain was Father Lopez. The tradition of the Clergy House was that she came deeply veiled to make her weekly confession. On these occasions the Church was closed to all save the old charwoman, who survived to tell Monsignor Johnson (parish priest in 1900) that she was instructed, when this mysterious lady passed her wearing widow's weeds, to drop a curtsy "for may be it was the Queen of England and may be not!" It is interesting to quote the pretty antithesis with which the historian Sir Archibald Alison ushered the Victorian Era:

"Shortly before the youthful heiress of England ascended the throne of her fathers, another lady, in the fullness of years, descended to the tomb, who, under a different state of English Law, might have sat on it."

None of her books of devotion have survived, perhaps because her principal legatee was Protestant, but a few volumes bearing her signature or tokens of ownership remain in the Portarlington Library such as:

Presentation copies of Charles Butler's works bound in red Morocco as follows:

The Life of Fénelon Archbishop of Cambray, inscribed "Mrs Fitzherbert with the Author's respects."

Some Account of the Life and Writings of James Benigne Bossuet Bishop of Meaux, inscribed "Mrs Fitzherbert with the Author's Respects."

<sup>1</sup> *Portarlington Papers.*

## Her Library

*Horae Biblicae*

*Horae Juridicae*

Butler's Letters, inscribed "with the author's respects."

Charles James: Poems in two Volumes, stamped with Mrs Fitzherbert's name.

*Memoires de Madame Manson*, inscribed "M. Fitzherbert."

Reflexions on the Cowpox, by William Fermor. Presentation Copy to Mrs Fitzherbert.

John Bell's Edition of Shakespeare 1788. "Bookseller to the Prince of Wales." Each volume is signed "M. Fitzherbert."

In 1835 Mrs Fitzherbert fell out a little with her beloved Brighton and posted away to Aix-la-Chapelle for the last time. We can only guess why from the letters her old crony Miss Jeffreys wrote to Minney:

(June 23) "I hear from others that she is well but from herself I hardly ever have a line, and Maryanne never writes. Not very kind as she knows how anxious I am about your Mama. Our kind friend Munster wrote me word they had been to Norwood and that Mrs Fitzherbert was going to reside there for some time, to visit the Gipsies I suppose? She went away from here so disgusted with Brighton that she told the Brisbanes that she really thought of not coming here next winter. All the business of the ungrateful behaviour of Barratt and losing the Election at the Alms House did for poor Brighton."

Relations with the Royal Family are noted in Sir George Seymour's Letter Book. It was typical that the Gloucesters, who had a blot on their escutcheon, were the only members of the Royal Family who stickled over Mrs Fitzherbert.

"(January 31, 1836) To H.R.H. *The Duchess of Gloucester at the Pavilion*. To ask H.R.H. to honor me with some minutes conversation before she again



## Mrs Fitzherbert

saw the King relative to the difficulty caused her relative to Mrs Fitzherbert.

"(June 24, 1836) To *Mrs Fitzherbert*. That I have communicated as she desired, Lady Haggerston's death to the King, who expressed great concern.

"(July 6, 1836) To *Mrs Fitzherbert*. Desiring her from the King to come to St James on the morning of the 13th and dine with His Majesty there the 14th inst.

"(August 5, 1836) To *Colonel Damer*. To ask about his and Mrs Fitzherbert's going to Paris."

Mrs Fitzherbert's precedence was tactfully accepted by the Royal Family except by the Duchess of Gloucester, who clung to the late Duke's instructions. He had died November 30, 1834, and Thomas Raikes noted in his Diary :

"Died at Bagshot H.R.H. the Duke of Gloster.<sup>1</sup> He was not a man of talent as may be inferred from his nickname of *Silly Billy*. His father married Lady Waldegrave; thus he was uncle to Mrs Damer."

His Royal Highness distinguished himself by his witty remark "Who's Silly Billy now?" when King William signed the Reform Bill.

On his widow's attitude to Mrs Fitzherbert, Sir George Seymour noted (January 29, 1836):

"I was sent for by the Duchess of Gloucester<sup>2</sup> who told me she had been recommended by the Queen to talk to me about the unwillingness she felt to depart from the Duke's injunctions not to receive Mrs Fitzherbert in her house (in which the Queen thought she was right) and she wished Mrs Fitzherbert to know the cause but to be assured of her kind feelings towards her. The King interrupted the conversation but the next day the Duchess sent for me again and I succeeded in dissuading her from entering into an

<sup>1</sup> Second Duke of Gloucester, son of Maria Lady Waldegrave and grandson of Mary Clement the milliner.

<sup>2</sup> Princess Mary, daughter of George III.

## “ A Wicked Prejudice ”

explanation with Mrs Fitzherbert, as there were objections to the King giving her an order to receive her, which would have been a more distinct recognition of Mrs Fitzherbert as his Brother's widow than was prudent for him to give. After some discussions between Their Majesties, the Duchess and the Landgravine of Hesse-Homburg to whom I had said: It was one of the matters that would settle itself if nothing was done about it; the matter terminated in this way.”

“ The Duchess of Gloucester sent for me to say . . . that the late Duke (which she rather mentioned as one of his sinful actions) had a wicked prejudice against Mrs Fitzherbert not she thought so much on account of the question of my sister's removal from her as from something between his mother<sup>1</sup> and Mrs Fitzherbert and that he had consented with some difficulty to her treating her like her sisters at the Pavilion two or three years since and had consented to it only on her giving a solemn promise that she would not invite her to her house, which Princess Sophia<sup>2</sup> knew of and she could not break and that her object was that Mrs Fitzherbert should somehow know why she did not ask her to her house and at the same time be convinced of her kind feelings towards her and the pleasure it would afford Her Royal Highness to meet Mrs Fitzherbert at dinner at Princess Augusta's or elsewhere.

“ I suggested that Mrs Fitzherbert was not yet going to Town and that this explanation might be delayed in which she acquiesced. She had wished Princess Augusta to say this to Mrs Fitzherbert but she was unwilling to do so.

“ I said my sister,<sup>3</sup> when hurried, was awkward about this sort of thing but was the person who had the most influence with Mrs Fitzherbert, and the Duchess of Gloucester concurred in my telling her and consulting her on the subject when I judged best.

<sup>1</sup> Maria Lady Waldegrave.

<sup>2</sup> Sister of the Duke of Gloucester.

<sup>3</sup> Minney Dawson-Damer.

## Mrs Fitzherbert

"The Landgravine had told me they were afraid of speaking to her thinking it might cause some *Tracasserie*. The King came in and then the matter rested without decision."

(January 30, 1836)

"The Duchess sent for me after dinner to say what she apprehended had happened. Mrs Fitzherbert had sent her a message by my sister to ask permission to come to her in Town as she scarcely knew how to answer. After discussing the matter, she said the King ordering her to receive Mrs Fitzherbert would settle the matter even in Princess Sophia's view, but that the King was unwilling to do so from indisposition to go against Princess Sophia of Gloucester. I said it would certainly prevent all difficulty if he did, as it would place her with Mrs Fitzherbert on the same footing with her sisters.

"The Duchess went and sat down with the King who put on his puzzled look, but she said to me as she passed on her way to her room: It will do very well and he will come to me tomorrow to settle it and you had better say nothing to your sister but come to me after luncheon tomorrow.

"During the night it occurred to me that an order might be misconstrued as a more distinct recognition of Mrs Fitzherbert's position in his family than had been yet adopted and that it was neither good for him nor for Mrs Fitzherbert herself that it should be so considered and I wrote the note herewith to the Duchess in the morning before Chapel.

Madam—Will Your Royal Highness allow me to have a little conversation with my sister before the subject, on which I was honoured with your expressing to me your sentiments, is settled.

I think on consideration that if Mrs Damer and I can expect to succeed in carrying to Mrs Fitzherbert's mind half the impression I feel at present of your Royal Highness' amiable consideration for her, which I have seen evinced by so much anxiety

## The Duchess Shocked

to avoid what might distress her feelings that it might not be necessary for that object to take any further step that Your Royal Highness before contemplated.

"H.R.H. immediately saw me but harped upon the King giving his wish as the best mode, saying also she was after the time of Mrs Fitzherbert with the late King and evidently avoiding any reference to the circumstances of their connection or relation to each other. She objected to my talking as I proposed to my sister until she had seen the King.

"At 6 I went up again to H.R.H. who had sent for me while I was out and she told me the King had not determined further and could not do so without again consulting the Queen, which he disliked doing, and the Queen that the promise should be regarded, so he wished the matter to stand over, which was what I had recommended telling the Landgravine. It was one of the matters which was likely to settle itself by never requiring anything to be done about it and so the matter now ended. The Duchess however will, I see, probably see her if she offers to come to Gloucester House and say nothing about the matter to Princess Sophia.

"The Duchess was shocked at her Mother-in-Law's<sup>1</sup> correspondence she has read."<sup>2</sup>

The matter was solved before the year was out for the Duchess wrote to Minney (October 7, 1836):

"I hear you are in town. If so pray call upon me. I wrote to know how my god-child<sup>3</sup> is and if in town will you bring her to see me. I hope Mrs Fitzherbert is well. Pray remember me kindly to her and let me know if your sister is in Town. I trust you are going to Brighton and that I shall have the pleasure of finding Mrs Fitzherbert there as well as yourself. I shall

<sup>1</sup> Lady Waldegrave, who had taken a strong line during the Seymour case.

<sup>2</sup> *Ragley Papers*.

<sup>3</sup> The godchild was the late Lady Constance Leslie

## Mrs Fitzherbert

follow the King and Queen a few days after they go there and am remaining at Gloucester House until then. Should Mrs Fitzherbert be in Town and feel well enough to call upon me any day she will come about half past three o'clock I shall be happy to see her.

"Yours affectly MARY."

The following must have been the last attention Mrs Fitzherbert ever received from Royalty:

"Sir Frederick Watson is honored with the King's command to express to Mrs Fitzherbert His Majesty's hope that her health will admit of His Majesty's enjoying the pleasure of her company at dinner today.

"Pavilion, Friday, December 23, 1836."

The answer of Mrs Fitzherbert was directed to George Seymour:

"Pray be kind enough to say everything proper to the King and express my regret that I am not able to avail myself of his invitation to dine today. I really suffer so much from rheumatism that I am fit for nothing but sitting by my fireside. I am only this moment been able to leave my bed or would have answered your kind note sooner. Half past twelve."

One of her last notes was written to George Damer:

"I enclose you, my dear George, the inventory of my Plate. I have told you the particulars concerning the distribution of it and they, you and Minney, will select what you would wish to have to complete what you have already in your possession."

Looking through the remainder of her papers she discovered a correspondence of twenty-three years with the late Duke of Kent. From these she selected a number which she placed in Minney's hands saying:

"I give into your care some of the Duke of Kent's letters which I feel may prove of interest to his Child and, when I am gone, I wish you to offer them to Princess Victoria."

## The Last Christmas

Naturally Mrs Fitzherbert kept back letters referring to Madame de St Laurent and the Duke's domestic affairs before marriage. The others were duly offered by Minney to the Duchess of Kent a year after Mrs Fitzherbert's death for presentation to the new Queen, together with the miniature of the Duke which had been given to Mrs Fitzherbert by old Queen Charlotte.

Mrs Fitzherbert passed her last Christmas and New Year at Brighton. The Damers were in Paris at a time when an attempt was made against the life of Louis Philippe. Thomas Raikes recorded (January 3, 1837):

"There was a grand reception at Court for the New Year. My daughter was presented by Mrs Damer. The Royal Family looked careworn. When the King came up to Mrs Damer she expressed her happiness at seeing him look so well, notwithstanding the shock which he must have received. His reply was very curious: Yes notwithstanding, but it is useless."

Colonel Damer wrote a full and interesting account to Mrs Fitzherbert who had retired to Brighton. Here she could live at peace. The excitements of the Reform Bill had blown away all the scandals about her and the Regent and Queen Caroline. The newspapers had other things to caricature and lampoon. As her health slowly faded, she herself began to fade from life.

The roar and dust of the London atmosphere she put aside for the benevolent air of Brighton. Here she was not the living ghost of a great scandal, not even a woman of mystery. To Brighton she was a benefactress, more so than the inhabitants ever dreamed. Had she not chosen a little Sussex watering place for her romance with the Prince, it might never have risen to the position of Queen of English watering places. That proud wreath of sea-flowers would have gone to mediaeval Hastings or Ducal Eastbourne. There can be no historic doubt that Brighton remained

## Mrs Fitzherbert

a Royal pleasure station under her influence, and the Brightonians, citizens and tradesmen, acknowledged the fact. From time to time the new King and Queen with their attendant train of FitzClarences lit the Pavilion with their presence, but Mrs Fitzherbert was an abiding South Coast Queen. Even the royal liveries worn by her servants gave Brighton a slight constant air of Regality.

## CHAPTER XIV

After my death I wish no other herald  
To keep mine honour from corruption.

SHAKESPEARE (*Henry VIII*).

To the Memory of  
The Frail, the Enchanting, and the Sensible  
Mrs Fitzherbert,  
Who conjoined in a noble Mien, all the Accomplishments of Art  
and all the Gifts of Nature ;  
She received from Royalty  
Love, Gratification, Esteem, and Friendship.  
Endowed with a just Sense of her own Family Inferiority, she sought  
not what she could never conscientiously accept:  
Nevertheless, armed with a proper pride,  
She obtained the Summit of her Wishes, and died in the  
Year 18— universally lamented.

*The Wreck of Westminster Abbey.*

THE year 1837 was destined to bring great changes in England. Within two months Mrs Fitzherbert, King William IV, and Cardinal Weld were to die. Mrs Fitzherbert had no expectation of death, and was planning to go abroad and later pay her first visit to Came, the beautiful home which the Dawson-Damers had inherited from Lady Caroline in Dorsetshire. But the March winds proved fatal.

Mrs Fitzherbert found herself lying back upon her pillows, resigned to pass away. Death beckoned so unexpectedly, that illness and the last spiritual consolations arrived within a week. His merciful hand was surely drawing the curtains of her window and Brighton was passing out of view . . . or was it the faithful Mrs Mills, who had been with her since the Eighteenth Century? But the blinds were being drawn, as she sensed for ever.

Mrs Fitzherbert was at peace. She had received the Sacraments of the Church to whose moral teaching



## Mrs Fitzherbert

she had remained faithful under great difficulties and unexpected complications. A dark-robed figure stood once or twice in the doorway. Mrs Fitzherbert was dying. Her last scruples were confided in a low voice to the Church . . . and then they all were forgotten. The slow Litanies for the Dying were being chanted . . .

It would be tempting at this stage to read into her sinking consciousness the memories and phantoms of a lifetime such as Mr Lytton Strachey read into the flitting mind of Queen Victoria on her death-bed three-score years later. From the fantastic series of scenes he sketched, Mrs Fitzherbert could have only had one in common, "the turkey-cock King" William the Fourth. There was mention of the Royal Hand, which had been given to Mrs Fitzherbert in marriage. It survived to pat the little Princess Victoria.

Did Mrs Fitzherbert recall her past life as a drowning man sees back through a lifetime? The girlhood at Acton Burnell with her loving and beautiful mother? Did she remember being taken to France for her education and seeing the King of France at dinner and laughing and laughing at him till he sent the little English girl sugar-plums from his table?

Then her strange married life? Did she glimpse the gloomy pile of Lulworth and lovely Swynnerton, the Fitzherbert stronghold amid the Staffordshire trees with Stafford Castle on the landscape and the Wrekin like a blue sugar-cone far away in her native Shropshire? Her first husbands had long faded away leaving only names. . . . But the Prince of Wales—he came back from the dead in all the beauty of his Cosway miniature. She could see him lying on his bed at Carlton House bleeding from the wound which he said her cruelty had inflicted. Beside him was the Surgeon Keate and the excited beauty of Georgiana Duchess . . . Could she follow her own flight abroad with Lady Anne Barnard . . . and return a year later in a Post Chaise

## The Last Hours

from Dover to the little house in Park Street . . . where the Prince was climbing through the garden . . . and her drawing-room with old Uncle Errington and her brother standing while the wild-eyed Mr Burt was reading the Marriage Service . . . Whom God Hath joined together let no man put asunder! And the Prince saying "with this ring I thee wed, with my body I thee worship . . ." she could feel the ring on her finger still. . . . Afterwards all became confused, but she could glimpse crowds and crowds of wonderful people who were all dead now—passing like leaves in the wind; all her brothers and sisters and tiresome relations. The Prince seemed always to be attending her until he too was blotted out by hurrying shadows: shadows that by their shape seemed cast by the dwarfish Lady Jersey and the monstrous Marchioness of Hertford . . . and the lawyers in the Seymour Case, Perceval and Romilly, and lastly old Brougham looking like Beelzebub with the hell-marks washed off in pickle . . . and there were the Cumberlands and Gloucesters and the line of Royal Dukes standing in their Stars like disreputable Cherubim. . . . The faithful old Whale was opening the door for the last time and bowing . . . and old King William was reading her precious papers and blubbering his sympathy while Queen Adelaide was moving a little anxious in the background. . . .

Mrs Fitzherbert felt happy when she thought of her adopted children: Minney Seymour and Marianne Smythe! All that was left of her heart went out to them. She was happy to think she was dying in Brighton where they had lived with her . . . and thanks to her they had seen the wonderful life of the Great . . . there was the Pavilion with its row of Domes and Minarets that made a comedy of the Sussex sky. All was light and music within and the Prince's band was playing his favourite melody . . . Brighton the beloved . . . with the Dandies, the Beaux and Beauties and

## Mrs Fitzherbert

her friends passing up and down the Steyne . . . she could hear the slow drawl of the tide against the shingles and the famous Chain Pier irremovably clamped to the cliff. . . . Faces came near to her as in a dream. Beauchamp with his arms full of precious miniatures including hers. . . . Munster with his harassed but gallant look . . . and new friends stood about her, the younger men who venerated her: John Guirwood and George Seymour . . . and dear old Mr Forster who knew everything about her papers. . . . For a moment the great hooked face of the Duke swung into her ken . . . he was still burning her letters . . . burning and burning . . . she could almost smell the smoke of the wax or was it a whiff of incense? . . . she could still hear the murmur of the Litanies for the Dying. . . . Mr Lopez, her frightened little Chaplain, slipped from the room. She was not alone. The Daimers were kneeling in tears at her bedside with their little children: Georgiana, Evelyn, and Blanche. Mrs Fitzherbert was dreaming no longer and for the last time she looked upon the lovely girl whom she had loved with more than a mother's love . . . the beloved Minney sobbing with grief, but full of plans to give Mama the finest funeral ever known in Brighton. . . .

Sir Henry Halford came posting down from London at the first serious alarm, but he was too late to be able to change the situation. On Good Friday, Sir George Seymour had received word that Mrs Fitzherbert's strength was failing seriously and the following day he rode from Staines on horseback to communicate the news of her illness to the King, which His Majesty received with great anxiety though he assured himself that she would survive.

Sir George wrote on Holy Saturday to his sister (March 25, 1837):

"I rode over here with Horace this morning for the purpose of telling the King of the purport of your note

## Her Death

and am glad I did so as the Duchess of Gloster had communicated the fact of Sir Henry Halford having been sent for and increased the desire the King felt to know the circumstances, which had made it necessary, and the same information placed the matter in a more alarming point of view than your note which I read to His Majesty. He said every kind thing and expressed his confidence that she would do well. I shall stay here till 3, as, though I came over to catch the King before he went out, I desired my groom to bring over any account you sent by the Post and the King will not go out until he knows whether I hear today by the Post to Hampton Court."

The next day was Mrs Fitzherbert's last Easter. She had received the Last Sacraments on Saturday from her Chaplain, Don Lopez. The Dawson-Damers and their little children were again admitted into her bedroom. On Easter Monday she became unconscious and died peacefully towards evening to the sound of wind and wave upon the Sussex shore. In Sir George Seymour's Diary is a note preserving the exact hour :

" March 27. Met at Staines a bad account of Mrs Fitzherbert which I sent on to the King (she died at 7 p.m.)."

The Damers had kept all the Royal Family informed of Mrs Fitzherbert's illness, especially the King. From Windsor they had received word on the day of her death (March 27, 1837):

" I have submitted both your letters to the King who has received with extreme concern the very unfavourable account of the state of poor Mrs Fitzherbert which that of yesterday afternoon conveys. You are aware of His Majesty's warm regard for her and he cannot easily reconcile himself to the idea that her valuable life may have been closed. His Majesty orders me to assure you and Mrs Damer how sincerely he feels for you on this sad occasion."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Portarlington Papers.*

## Mrs Fitzherbert

Colonel Gurwood wrote to Sir George Seymour (March 27, 1837):

"You will probably have heard from Damer that Mrs Fitzherbert was breathing her last on the departure of the Post last night. Previous to my departure for Paris Mrs Fitzherbert gave me her Will to read, in which you, Mr Weld, Mr Forster and myself were named her executors. Should this Will not have been revoked by her since and whether or not you will still be one of her executors to represent your lasting interests, would it not be as well that you should proceed to Brighton to ascertain with the other executors what arrangements she had desired respecting her funeral?"<sup>1</sup>

The end had come suddenly and unexpected. Lord Stourton wrote later to Lord Albemarle to say:

"My knowledge, as I have before informed your Lordship that her end was wholly unexpected by herself for some days which preceded it, until she was *wholly unequal* to take cognisance of *any* business whatsoever, will account for no further notice. This information I received from the Roman Catholic clergyman, Don Lopez, her private chaplain."

A drawing made of Mrs Fitzherbert on her death-bed was described thus:

"Her face had fallen into its original form. Its fine osteology was perfect; the few furrows that time had traced upon its round muscles had disappeared. It presented a fine and firm oval face, the beautiful mouth, a high and rather Roman nose. The simple dress of death added to the solemn beauty of her appearance."<sup>2</sup>

Colonel Gurwood wrote some notes:

"Tuesday, 28 March, 1837.

"Lieut-Colonel Gurwood being sent the late Mrs

<sup>1</sup> *Ragley Papers.*

<sup>2</sup> Lady Morgan: *Memoir.*

## The King's Ring Removed

Fitzherbert's Will, by her order, believes himself to be one of the Executors. In the event of no Will being made subsequent to that of October or November last and in the absence of the other Executors therein named, he has employed Mr Cooper, who being a Catholic, and a person in whom Mrs Fitzherbert took an interest, and as he had prepared the funeral of the late Lady Stafford, to make the following preparatory arrangements for the Funeral.

"1. To make a shell and leaden coffin without delay. Further orders will be given on the intentions of the late Mrs Fitzherbert being made known through the Executors.

"2. To prepare Mourning for the Servants."

"Wednesday, 29 March, 1837.

"The Body placed in its coffin and carried below to the dining room. On taking up her hand for the removal of her wedding rings, only two remained: that of the late King, which during her lifetime never quitted her finger, had been removed from it. Mrs Townshend, her maid, told me that Mrs Damer had taken it off the previous night, which she had forgotten to communicate to me.

"Arranged with Mr Cullen, the Clergyman of the Catholic Chapel, that a vault in front and at the foot of the altar in the body of the Chapel should be made of a size to contain the coffin of the late Mrs Fitzherbert. Wrote to Mr Forster all I had done."

"Thursday, 30 March, 1837.

"Mrs Jerningham arrived."<sup>1</sup>

Colonel Gurwood as an Executor went to Tilney Street whence he wrote to Minney Damer (April 1, 1837):

"I have seen Yarmouth<sup>2</sup> who expressed a wish to be present at Mrs Fitzherbert's funeral. I told him that it would be quite private and that it appeared to be the wish to confine it to those mentioned by her

<sup>1</sup> *Fitzherbert Papers*, II.

<sup>2</sup> Lord Beauchamp that was, Lord Hertford to be.

## Mrs Fitzherbert

in her Will. He then stated that he should not wish to intrude but at the same time he wished to pay a tribute of respect to one whom he had so much valued. It is not improbable therefore but that he may come down on the chance of mingling in the number who may be admitted within the Chapel at the ceremony. If so I will give you timely notice of it before I come down on Tuesday evening.”<sup>1</sup>

Minney Damer wrote to Colonel Gurwood :

“ Brighton (April 2, 1837)

“ Many thanks for your letter. Its subject is the only pleasing one that has for some time helped my mind. I should be so very much grateful at Beauchamp putting so considerate and amiable an idea into execution, as I have never seen either the Will or the Codicil. I was not aware that anything was specified about those attending the Funeral beyond the desire of it being a Private one and the dread of the things, carriage etc. attending but my impression is that the attendance of a person whom she so very much affectioned, as Beauchamp, would have been an idea most pleasing to her and as so near a relation of mine I may assume, could but have assured this feeling. Marianne, myself and our eldest children intend going privately early to the Chapel so as not to form a feature in the melancholy procession. I have just seen Mr Cullen, who tells me with every degree of zeal and activity being shewn it is so improbable the preparations can be terminated for Wednesday morning.

“ It is better at once to settle the ceremony for Thursday positively. Will you therefore be good enough to make this communication with Mr Forster : I will to my brother. I wish I could be reasonable enough not to lament the impossibility of even inhabiting this dear old House. I know it exists for my advantage, but yet being for ever a House associated with my recollection from my earliest youth and the period when I returned to it as a home three

<sup>1</sup> *Portarlington Papers.*

## Minney to Gurwood

weeks ago, is a very bitter feeling, so certain it is that past blessings furnish to present grief. As for Tilney St I was so intimately acquainted with her wish and intention of the House being immediately disposed of that on that subject I have not a decided feeling and if I am obliged to go to London as I suppose I must on Saturday I have settled to sleep at Mary Anne's house and keep house there for the few days we may be obliged to stay in town and as both her establishment and ours were dispersed, we can take any servant, who wishes to remain in the family, which is a gratification, for the total dispersion of so many attached servants was very painful. All I can feel is reluctance to lose sight of even the inanimate objects with which I have been surrounded for so many years and I must entreat the indulgence of the Executors, as I have only a life-interest in the trust.

"I am aware that legal control is required, but such property of furniture and ornament as I might wish to select being secured to my children appears to me more reasonable than the alternative of my bidding against myself.—Pray forgive me saying all this for I know you must all be just but in this respect you must be a little generous. My brother being my brother makes him a perfect Brutus, but we do not live in the time of the Romans. I cannot find a term that is strong enough to express my sense of admiration at Mary Anne's conduct. It is quite admirable and right-minded, unselfish and strait forward. Did I feel on looking into my heart that I had ever attempted or excited a particle of influence unfavorable to her, her present conduct would make my conscience smart. Taking one thing with another, without being of a suspicious nature I feel I have been quite incapable of acting and feeling as they both do. Although the ceremony does not take place till Thursday, I suppose you will still come on Tuesday. I have a very painful feeling associated with you that I trust will be removed when —— brings me down the Box from Coutts. It is so improbable for me to suppose



## Mrs Fitzherbert

that so regular as that dearest soul was in anything connected with the interest of others that she could neglect executing what I am so convinced was her intention."<sup>1</sup>

Mrs Fitzherbert was confined in a crimson velvet casket and lay in state in a heavily draped chamber of her home for a week surrounded by a blazing wreath of candles. Her Chaplain offered Mass for her soul unremittingly. Hooded nuns watched the body of their benefactress, over whom Minncy had laid some white roses, the fitting emblem of the ancient family to whom she was born.

Mrs Fitzherbert's death put Brighton and Windsor into moral mourning. The King received word of her death on the Castle Terrace and hastened to share the sorrowful news with the Queen. The Darners were in charge of affairs and sent Expresses with the news to all members of the Royal Family at home and abroad. Without exception letters of sincere sympathy were returned, even from the Duke of Cumberland in Hanover. Colonel Damer went further and supplied the local Press with inspired information, which Sir George Seymour thought so indiscreet that he wrote to the King to absolve himself of whispering abroad. The *Brighton Gazette* had exceeded itself in an article of tactful but truthful benediction, which the *Times* answered sternly and angrily in a leader of April 5. The old controversy was waged even over her open grave.

All Brighton flocked to the funeral on April 6th. Mrs Fitzherbert and Sir George Seymour had desired the simplest ceremony to be performed, but the adopted daughters and the newly emancipated clergy insisted on a scene of pomp, of which a description survives in Sir George Seymour's papers:

<sup>1</sup> *Fitzherbert Papers*, II.

# The Funeral

## FUNERAL OF THE LATE MRS FITZHERBERT

### Two Mutes

A Page	{	Undertaker and Assistants The State Lid of Feathers <sup>1</sup> supported by a Featherman	}	A Page
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### Two Mutes

Four Pages	{	A Hearse and Six Horses decorated with Feathers and Velvets	}	Four Pages
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A Page to each Coach	{	Five Mourning Coaches with four horses each decorated with Feathers and Velvets	}	A Page to each Coach
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The Private Carriage of the deceased. (This was a barouche, afterwards sold for £62).

The *Gentleman's Magazine* gave the following account of Mrs Fitzherbert's funeral (May 1837):

"Her mortal remains were removed on the 6th April from her mansion on the old Steyne to the Roman Catholic Chapel at the eastern part of Brighton for interment. The funeral procession consisted of six mourning coaches and the private carriage of the deceased. In the first coach were the Hon E. S. Jerningham, Sir F. H. Bathurst, and Colonel Dawson-Damer. In the second, the Earl of Munster, Colonel Gurwood and Sir George Seymour: in the third Mr Frederick Seymour, Mr Doyle and Mr Blaker the physician. The remaining carriages contained the deceased lady's domestics. High Mass was performed by the officiating minister Mr Cullen. The coffin was afterwards lowered into a grave eleven feet deep, constructed in the centre of the Chapel."

<sup>1</sup> It is hardly necessary to point out that Feathers were an accompaniment of old-fashioned Funerals and that there can have been no attempt to symbolise the Three Feathers of the Prince of Wales which the caricaturists had applied so mercilessly to Mrs Fitzherbert living.

## Mrs Fitzherbert

The Executors paid Father Cullen £50 for the Vault in a place of honour in front of the High Altar, and according to the Brighton records the total outlay amounted to £395 so that it might be said "the little port had seldom seen a costlier funeral."<sup>1</sup>

The *Times* added (April 8, 1837) "The Chapel was hung with black and was full of well-dressed persons, who were admitted by tickets to view the ceremony," and that the eldest son of Mrs Edward Jerningham "who is the godson of Mrs Fitzherbert is to have the reversion of the property."

The procession passed slowly up the Marine Parade until it took the turn into the Road called after the donor of the land, in which Mrs Fitzherbert was buried, the Bristol Road. The Earl of Munster had the honour to represent his father the King. The two adopted daughters, Minney and Mary Anne, had been conveyed with their children to the Church, and were waiting by the graveside. Father Cullen sang the High Requiem Mass with the assistance of other priests, gathered from the Vicariate. The last words were said in English according to Sir George Seymour's notes: "a prayer pronounced in English at the grave by Cullen, the Chief Priest, who was assisted by Mr Lopez and others."

Sir George Seymour also recorded the names of Mrs Fitzherbert's servants with their length of service. They filled three carriages full:

Fanny Davies	Housemaid, London	10 years
Martha Waite	Housemaid, Brighton	4 years
Mary Southerwood	Housemaid, Brighton	1 yr 7 months
Eliza Dyer	Still Room Maid	2 yrs 4 months
Mary Pettit	Kitchen Maid	4 months
Fanny Rigby	Scullery Maid	1 yr 4 months
William King	Under Butler	5 yrs 9 months
George Taylor	Porter, London	2 yrs 1 month
James Ford	Coachman	1 yr 5 months
Robert White	Footman	1 yr 6 months

<sup>1</sup> Tennyson: *Enoch Arden*.



**MRS FITZHERBERT'S THREE WEDDING RINGS**

From a photograph of Mrs Fitzherbert's tomb at St John the Baptist's Church, Brighton,  
taken by the *Brighton Herald*.



## Father Cullen's Sermon

James Littlefield	Footman	1 yr 1 month
Mrs Viney	Housekeeper	13 yrs 9 months
Mrs Townshend	Lady's Maid	21 yrs 8 months
Mrs Haslehuist	Cook	13 yrs 6 months
Mrs Mills		38 years
Richard Bassett	Butler	5 yrs 9 months

The faithful Butler, Whale, had apparently departed in 1831 and been succeeded by Bassett. At least five of the number survived from those whom William IV had ordered to wear mourning for George IV, husband of the deceased. Father Cullen waited till the following Sunday to deliver his funeral sermon, of which only the text could be thought allusive to the extraordinary life and position of the dead: "I will give thee a *Crown* of Life."

By her Will Mrs Fitzherbert thoughtfully desired there should be no hatchment at her Funeral and indeed the College of Arms would have been sorely troubled whether and how to add the Royal Arms to those of Weld and Fitzherbert and Smythe.

Later, Lady Morgan visited Tilney St. and described the relics in her *Memoir*:

"The flower of all flowers in my garland of friendship is Mrs Dawson-Damer. You know she is the adopted child of the Prince and Mrs Fitzherbert whose property she has inherited and what property! . . . Mrs Damer said she had got up a table expressly for me. It was covered with beautiful relics. In a coffer filled with pledges of love and gallantry from the Prince in the heyday of his passion. A Pandora's box without hope at the bottom. A number of their own portraits set in all sorts of sizes and costumes and oh what costumes! Toupees, chinons, flottans, tippy bobby hats, balloon handkerchiefs. . . . The Prince's face was insignificant, a fair, fat, flashy young gentleman, his mother's snubby features spoiling his pleasant smile; in short he was the old Queen *bleached white*! The pictures of the Prince and Mrs

## Mrs Fitzherbert

Fitzherbert were all splendidly set in brilliants with hearts and ciphers, crowned with royal coronets and true lovers knots."

Of the Brighton House, Munster wrote sadly to Minney (August 28, 1837):

"I am as melancholy as a Gibcat (as Shakespeare would say) having been through the old house with Wiltshire, finding Lord Westmoreland and Lady Georgiana Fane at the door in their carriage we accompanied them with Toppin, went over old haunts. I think I should have shewn great weakness but for the dread of being laughed at by my old competitor of the Steps. I had no idea the whole house and furniture would be so exactly as you left it. What scenes did not every object recall to my recollection of thirty years ago to the last moment you quitted it! The dressing room with most of the Indian ink profiles there but a little white bed in the corner of her bedroom, that sad room. On entering the drawing room, I almost expected to see you on the sofa behind the screen: all as you saw it the last time and I could scarce gulp my feelings when fortunately Lady Geo, whose voice was heard denouncing the House as 'far from her friends' and ending (as Lord Westmoreland was sitting in the room between the little Drawing Room and the Dressing Room) by telling the poor blind old man that if he could see he would see nothing but a brick wall: Toppin pressing and urging and the feebleness of Lord Westmoreland's mind combating Lady Geo's vociferation and reasons for not taking it. She, in short, likes being at the Hotel, and Wiltshire and myself withdrew to avoid the family squabble and on my part to be rid of a discussion by no means in accordance with the feelings I had been wrought into by old and peaceful recollection.

"I stood in the Dining Room and remembered it as your old dining room with Miss Meyer. I recollected it as our Theatre and again as hung with black on the late sad occasion and the little room where I

## Fitzherbert House

used to dine five days out of seven from 1811 to 1812 and you used to come to desert."

The old Lord Westmoreland, who had been Lord Lieutenant of Ireland had considered taking the house, which passed to a number of owners, some of whom Mrs Fitzherbert could hardly have approved. It became a Liberal Club and then a Conservative one.

The houses on the Steyne and in Tilney St. were left to their desolation. "Steyne House," as it was afterwards called, became in 1883 the home of the Young Men's Christian Association in Brighton. Tilney Street was sold to Lord Manvers.

Mrs Fitzherbert's London house remained one of the most interesting survivals in Mayfair for nearly a century. It was visible in a line from the Park not far beyond the right of Stanhope Gate. Dorchester House stood to the left and at the bottom of Stanhope Place could be seen the walls protecting the courtyard of Chesterfield House.

Mrs Fitzherbert's house has been demolished in the general improvement and beautification of London. It was the writer's happiness to enter the old house for the first and last time at the invitation of the late Lord Esher. On his next visit he entered a strange building whose portals bore the interesting name "Fitzherbert House," but was conducted into the finest appointed Gambling Club in the Metropolis! This improvement is symbolic of the present neighbourhood, for the anachronisms once known as "Chesterfield House" and "Dorchester House" have been swept away lest a more democratic generation should ever regret the days when Park Lane was adorned by a Renaissance Palace and the character of London was reflected in the nobility of her mansions. In their place erections more suitable have been constructed, which the English can without difficulty admire and in which the cosmopolitans condescend to dwell.



## Mrs Fitzherbert

The memory of Mrs Fitzherbert is preserved in the Church of which she was a founder at Brighton, in the monument and epitaph therein.

In her first grief Minney wrote this Epitaph :

### Sacred to the Memory of MARIA FITZHERBERT

who was born July the 26th 1756 and who departed on the 27th of March 1837 a World where she was exposed to trials of no ordinary nature. The record of her extensive Charity and Benevolence will be inshrined where it must ever be preserved in the hearts and grateful recollection of the surviving inhabitants of this town, which she made her chief Residence and where she drew her latest Breath.

One to whom she was more than a mother has placed the monument to her Revered and Beloved Memory as a humble though feeble tribute of gratitude and affection.

The eventual inscription reads to-day :

In a vault near this spot are deposited the remains of

### MARIA FITZHERBERT

She was born on the 26th of July 1756 and expired at Brighton on the 27th of March 1837.

One to whom she was more than a parent has placed this monument to her revered and beloved memory, as a humble though feeling tribute of her everlasting gratitude and affection.

R. I. P.

## Minney's Epitaph

Carew, described as "a rising genius from Waterford" and a protégé of Lord Egremont, for whom he had carved the statue of St John Baptist in the Church, was entrusted with the graceful sculpture upon the monument which bears these additional lines to-day:

In loving remembrance of our dear Mother Mary Seymour (Honble Mrs G. L. D. Damer) the adopted daughter of Mrs Fitzherbert who placed this pious memorial of affection and gratitude here in 1837. She died in 1848. Her only surviving children Blanche Haygarth and Constance Leslie place this record in 1910.

Apparently there was a reason for this afterthought as recorded in a note by Lady Constance Leslie:

"Owing to Monsignor Johnson's advice my sister Blanche and I added a few lines to above Epitaph with our mother's name owing to her effacing herself. Monsignor Johnson was told by some American Tourists that they were Mrs Fitzherbert's heirs and had placed this monument to her memory."

The figure of Mrs Fitzherbert appears kneeling on a prie-dieu before a Chalice and an opened Prayer Book. The weeds are the weeds of holy widowhood. The marble hands are clasped in prayer, but not sufficiently to conceal the *three* wedding rings which Holy Church, not only permitted, but required her to wear in the Sanctuary. By one of the curious ironies of chance, for it could hardly have been intentional, Mrs Fitzherbert's monument was found to occupy a space already inscribed SANCTE GEORGI ORA PRO NOBIS. This was perhaps the least suitable wording that could have adorned her resting-place.

## Mrs Fitzherbert

For the world at large the best would have been the words recorded by the faithful George Seymour :

“ The Duke of Wellington says Mrs Fitzherbert is the most honest woman he ever met.”

For herself Mrs Fitzherbert might have been tempted to borrow a sentence from a Play by her old friend and champion Sheridan and say :

“ I leave my character behind me.”

FINIS

## APPENDIX I

### THE PRINCE OF WALES' LETTER TO MRS FITZHERBERT PROPOSING MARRIAGE (NOVEMBER 3, 1785)

THE Prince finally brought Mrs Fitzherbert to terms by an immense and impressive letter of 42 pages which she preserved among the Papers which were finally deposited in Coutts' Bank (November 3, 1785). This was a *longa et verbosa epistola* indeed.

I hardly know *my dearest and only beloved Maria* how I am to begin this letter to you. Such a train of extraordinary and wonderful events have happened lately, which at first created the greatest apprehensions and alarms in my bosom, and since have tended to the facilitating and entire arrangement of our plan, so that nothing now is wanting but the arrival of my adored Wife in this Country to make me the happiest of Men, that I can hardly persuade myself that I have not been in a dream for these ten days past. I shall now begin with endeavouring to give you as concise an account as I can of the most interesting and principal events, and which are most material for you to be informed of. However, before I enter entirely upon an account of the whole of this business, I must beg leave to preface my narration with desiring you to observe when you have read this Letter through, whether my attachment to my Maria has ever varied even in the most trifling instance, from the first moment I revealed my passion to her to the present period, and in the next place when you are thoroughly acquainted with the train of events I am going to relate, whether my conduct has not been worthy of

## Appendix I

that attachment she expressed to me in her last letter and of the consent she then gave me, and last of all whether I have not acted in every circumstance that has lately happened most strictly up to the character of *her Lover and of her Husband*, titles I would not change for the possessions of the whole Universe.

Immediately after the last Letter I wrote to you, we sent over to Holland, and we received about a week ago the following answers to our questions of which I have sent an exact Copy inclosed in this Letter but of which I shall take no notice at present, and not till very late in the course of this Letter, as there are many other circumstances much more interesting to us which preceded our receiving this answer from Holland, and which I am now going to enter upon. A few days after I had written to you, a Gentleman (whose name I will make known to you when I see you) who had lived upon some sort of intimacy with me at Brighthelmstone and who really is a very gentlemanlike man both in his disposition, and manner, but to whom I have never the least idea of mentioning anything in the way of business, as we were walking out one Morning together, asked me if I had never had any intention or desire of going abroad, I answered I had, and that I believed I should from the total ruined state of my affairs be obliged to put that plan soon in execution, and I added that as there was no secret in that I made no scruple of talking very openly of it, he lamented very much the reason wherefore I was to leave this Country, but said he thought it might tend very much to my advantage and amusement. Here our conversation ended that day without going any further. However I observed from that moment he more and more sought my society and particularly if he saw me either walking or riding alone. Some days after the conversation I have just been relating to you had passed, he began mentioning Politics to me and asking my objections to the present Administration. I said it was too long and too old a story to be revived and in short that I

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had too many to be able to explain them, that my aversion was rooted upon good grounds and that it was not a little that could eradicate it. He then asked me if I had ever applied to the present Ministers about the arrangements of my affairs, and if I had not, why I had not. I told him that they had always slighted me upon every occasion, and that I was above paying my Court to any earthly Being whatever, that I trusted I should be able to extricate myself as an honorable and honest Man without the assistance of anyone, but my own. He then went on saying: but if the Ministers should be inclined to do what you could wish would you feel yourself obliged to them? I said: certainly yes, indeed that I should look upon myself as a perfect Madman, was I to throw away an opportunity of extricating myself out of my difficulties especially if it was not at the expense of my honor, but that if the Ministers supposed that I should cringe to them in order to make them do it, or that after they had done it I should desert my old staunch Friends, and throw all the support I could into them they were very much mistaken, for that I had rather be an indigent and independent Man whose principles and honor would be respected, than one wallowing in riches and affluence and upon whose integrity the slightest reflection might be cast; but enough, said I, to him has passed upon this subject, you are not acquainted and never could be from your situation with the present Ministers or with their views, and therefore cannot at all be a Judge of how I am situated respecting them. How do you know that? said he immediately, know then that the First Minister is the person I know the best and that I respect the most as I believe him to be a perfectly honorable and disinterested Man. I then stopped him short and said that I thought it was very ungenerous of him to lead me on to find out what my Sentiments were, without previously acquainting me with the circumstance of his regard for the First Minister, however that I was not in the least ashamed of my Sentiments and that I

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had already and so frequently expressed them in public that I believed and flattered myself everybody that had ever heard my name mentioned had heard them also. He said that they were sentiments that did me the greatest credit and honor and were worthy of that character for honor and integrity which he had always understood I gloried in, he then asked whether he might relate the conversation that had passed between us to the Minister. I absolutely refused that as I thought it would appear that I either wanted to insult him, or to draw on some sort of a communication between us, neither of which I wished. There everything rested that day. However the next morning he came and breakfasted with me, and said that he could not help thinking over all night what had passed the preceding day between us, and that it was a pity that something could not be done to set me at perfect liberty to shew me in the proper light I deserved to the People not only of my own Country to whom I was the greatest glory possible, but to other European Nations for he was sure they would adore me whenever I came to be known by them. Compliments and words that went in at one ear and out of the other. I detest flattery from the bottom of my Soul and therefore prevented his going on any further as soon as I possibly could. I said it was very true it might be a great pity that nothing could or would be done for me by the Nation and by my Father, but that, as there was not the smallest probability of any plan being adopted upon my account that could give me the smallest satisfaction and as I myself did not see the possibility of it, we had better talk no more upon that Subject. He said he must beg my pardon but he must proceed a little further. He then began with putting the following question to me: If the Ministers should have formed any plan, would you give it a patient hearing and consider it well over? Stop, said I immediately. I should imagine from what you mentioned yesterday of your great regard to the First Minister that you are informed of his Secrets and

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which if you are determined to mention to me, I shall certainly not keep, and therefore I will not hear them or else that you are employed by the Minister to sound me, neither of which will I admit of, I will have nothing to do with any underhand work nor will I lend my name to it, but if the Minister has anything to propose to me, let him speak out himself, or let one of his Emissaries, you or anyone else, speak out, as coming from him to me with his authority to lay any plan or plans he may wish to lay before me, and I will give them a proper consideration, and I will then return him an answer when my resolution is taken without exposing him either to the World or to my Father. In short in order not to detain you too long, my Maria, before we come to what is most essential, he acknowledged that he came directly from the Minister to me, that there were two plans which had been thought over, the one arising from my Father, the other from the Minister, but that the Minister was greatly offended with my Father's conduct of late to him, and that therefore as he had always wished to instil me with a good opinion of him, knowing that most likely in the common course of things one of these days I should be his Sovereign he wished to adopt that plan that would be most agreeable to me, relinquishing both his own Plan and that formed by my Father, would I but let him know any one I had formed myself, before I sent it in to my Father that he might be able to back it with all his might and main. I said I was very much obliged to the Minister for this declaration but that I must entreat and insist that he did not put himself in the least in a perilous situation respecting my Father on my account, a man who neither had it in his power or his inclination to support him hereafter, for I repeated that I could at no time alter my sentiments with respect to my own Friends, or my conduct towards them. He declared that this was very noble in me, and that he should relate what had passed in conversation between him and me to the Minister, that he was only at present at liberty to say that there were two



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plans as I have already said the one arising from my Father the other from the Minister, that the Minister's Plan, was for my travelling but of how or where he declared himself perfectly ignorant, that this plan was to be communicated to my Father the next day by the Minister, and that afterwards it was to be explained to him in order that he might communicate it to me; but as to My Father's plan he was perfectly in the dark. Now the plot will begin to thicken. I have been obliged to detain you, my Maria, this long to shew you the thorough good grounds I had to begin upon, and how entirely I have held throughout the same candid, plain, firm line of conduct, to the Minister, my Father and to Thee. Was I capable of acting otherwise in any one instance I should be unworthy of the character of your Husband, a name I never will part from till I am unworthy of it, or till death shall tear me from Thee. But to proceed, the next day I saw nothing of my Man. However, the second day he came with a long face ready made-up for the purpose saying he had a great deal to communicate to me that was of the utmost consequence, that he wished very much to have an hour's conversation with me if I could find a moment in the course of the day when we should not be interrupted as what he had to say required a good deal of explanation, and consideration. I immediately said most undoubtedly and that as I had always made it a maxim never to postpone business of consequence if I could possibly help it I was ready to hear anything he had to say, and would order that no one should be let in to interrupt us. He then began with saying that he had had a long conference with my Father, and that if I would allow him he would relate as concisely as possible what he understood to have passed in these two different conferences respecting the two plans he had previously and antecedently mentioned some days before to me. I stopped him and said that if he would remember there was one plan namely my Father's concerning which he said he was perfectly in the dark. He said he remained so

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still, but he thought he could guess what was the drift of it. He then began with saying that the Minister after having asked an audience begged leave to open his plan to him, that my Father said he was very ready to listen to any plans he had to propose to him, but that he had also a plan of his own to talk over. The Minister's Plan which he then acquainted me with was for me to travel for a certain time but under certain restrictions, and that any debts I might have should then be liquidated during my absence. My objections to this Plan were only relative to the restrictions, such as that any Man who had ever tasted liberty and the sweets of ease could never consent to any restraint. However my objections to this Plan were nothing I found, as my Father had already stated his and the principal of which was that there had been a report and an idea that some time back a year or so I had only wished to go abroad in order to marry an English lady, whose name my Father did not then recollect, and he gave the Minister leave to give that as a reason for his objecting to this Proposal. I shall take no more notice of this Plan or of my answer to it till I have told you what my Father's plan was, which he desired might not be carried formally from him to me as a message, but plainly stated as having been mentioned by him to the Minister, and that whatever answer I made to it should be instantly carried back to him. Well then this proposal was that provided I would marry the Prince of Orange's daughter, an immense increase of Income with a perfect clearing of all debts.

You are too well acquainted with my Heart, my dearest Wife, and with its way of thinking to suppose that had I been without any attachment whatever, I should have risked the sacrificing my happiness and liberty to any pecuniary or interested view but being bound by all the ties which Love and Honor can render forcible, which were confirmed by the solemn vow I made unto You and unto Heaven in the most sacred manner and at the most awful of moments, which was then registered in the Books of Eternity, and

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since has been ratified as mutual by the consent you so lately have given, how could I act otherwise than by instantly rejecting a proposal so repugnant not only to everything that is both divine and human but to my own feelings. I therefore immediately said that, I was excessively sensible of my Father's goodness but as I had frequently declared my sentiments that I never should marry, unless it was the Woman I could prefer to all the World, (for I did not hold Marriage in such slight estimation as some people did,) he must excuse me, if I declined his offer, that as I understood it was his desire to marry my Brother, I begged that my declining to enter the Holy State might not be the means of throwing any Bar or stop to what concerned him, on the contrary that so far from wishing to impede the happiness of any one of my Family, I should always be the first in endeavouring to promote that of all my relations, but that I did not see why I was to sacrifice myself for the rest of the family. This was the answer I returned to my Father's Proposal.

The Gentleman then, who brought these two Proposals, said that this was very well and very handsome on my part, but that my Father was desirous of knowing whether I had any other reasons at the bottom, than those which I had assigned which stimulated me to decline this offer, as he had always thought that I should be inclined to refuse it, in short whether if I went abroad my motive for so doing would not be in order to see you, and last of all whether my attachments being secured to you were not the reasons for my not accepting this Proposal. It immediately struck me how much persecution I should be able to save myself, and in the second place that the means were now thrown into my hands of acting in a manner I always wished to do. I mean candidly and openly, and with the spirit that becomes not only a Gentleman, but a Man, and last of all of publicly assuring at least to my Father the sentiments which I profess to my beloved Wife and which I glory in, and which I told Thee, my Maria, thou shouldest one of these days see

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me do. Could I do better, can I, should I, ever enjoy a moment's happiness, a moment's joy, a moment's comfort without Thee, no, Thou art my Life, my Soul, my all, my everything. But enough! I will proceed. I said my Father knew me well enough to be certain that no view on earth, particularly an interested one could ever tempt me, was I disengaged from any attachment whatever to risk my Happiness or comfort in the smallest instance, but that I could not but confess since he was so inquisitive, and so desirous of knowing the true state of my affections, that I was attached for life, and had long been so to the most amiable of Women, that nothing now could alter either my sentiments respecting her, or any affection for her, that I assured him had that not been in the case I should have returned the same answer to the Proposal, and that I flattered myself as I had been thus candid with him, he would be equally candid and fair with me, and that he would therefore not in future press me to do what I never could comply with. Thus ended the conversation of the day. However I was greatly surprised at seeing the *Gobetween* (a name I have coined just now) arrive two or three days after he desired to say a few words in private. I instantly complied with his request, and attended him into another Room. He then said he was commissioned to ask me should I wish to go abroad and if I did, whether any idea of a marriage with you was or would be my motive for travelling. I told him that those were questions which neither he, nor anyone else not even my Father had any right to ask; now, Sir, said he, will you allow me to put another question to you which I think too indelicate to be asked, by anyone else but your Father and almost too indelicate to be put to You in your situation by him, however in order to be perfectly true to the trust I have undertaken of having the honor of waiting upon you, I cannot help asking it according to my orders, but as I flatter myself you think that though so entrusted and so commissioned I would do nothing that was dishonorable or what I

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conceived contrary to your interest, I request of you not to answer the question unless you perfectly wish it, or think that you are obliged to answer it any way in the World, except by saying I do not choose to answer it, or if you intend to answer it, I must beg of you to take time to consider well over what answer you intend to make. I have already declared to the Minister after some time hesitating whether I should come with such a question to you, that if I did I should first of all entreat and supplicate you not to answer this interrogation unless you entirely wished it and that if you did I should desire you to take time to consider it thoroughly well over first before you returned any answer whatsoever. I told him the question startled me a little at first as it was an extraordinary one, though not an unexpected one, however that as I always acted but with one motive and upon the same grounds in everything, I would after pre-facing that I thought such an interrogation perfectly unhandsome and unfair, return such an answer, as I thought perfectly honorable, and that was "that what was done in this affair could not be undone". He begged me to explain myself further, but added at the same time that he had most fully got his answer. I then said that he might torture his Brain, to find anything more out for I would not answer him, but that if my Father wanted to be informed of further particulars I was ready to satisfy him but no one else. He then left me. However he again returned the next day and said he was ordered after having made pretty near the same apologies as the preceding day, to put the same question as he had the day before, to which I returned the same answer, still assuring him that I was ready to give my Father any further satisfaction. He then said that though none of them wanted to learn anything more that they were perfectly satisfied, that they were thoroughly convinced I was married or at least they were certain from what I said that if I was not married (which they did not believe to be the case) I should be soon, and that I

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never should marry any other Woman but You, this was said with a sort of interrogating look, to which I bowed assent. Think, my Maria, my beloved Wife that I have deceived them or mean to deceive them in the least by what I have said. No, I have looked upon myself as married for above this year and half, ever since I made to Thee, and Thou madest to me in the face of Heaven, a Vow mutually to regard one another as Man and Wife, and never to belong to anyone else but to each other, and which Vow thou hast so lately confirmed by the consent Thou hast given to become *mine*; dost Thou think, thou only beloved of my Heart, that if it had been possible for Thee to disregard such bonds, to have broken your vows and to have thrown Yourself into the arms of Another. First of all I neither could nor would have survived it, but supposing I could have borne the seeing you in the arms of another, and that knowing you had broken through all the laws both Human and Divine, that that would have been a reason for my doing the same, no, because you have done wrong, that is no excuse, no palliation to me for acting wrong. I have principles which I glory in, principles of honor and justice, from which I can at no time deviate, on the contrary to which I must ever most steadfastly adhere especially when they are strengthened by Love, and the consciousness of acting right. One more question before we parted did I ask the Emissary that was then with me, and that was whether my Father was very violent at the idea of my being married. He said no, that he had said what was decreed in Heaven could not be subverted on Earth, in short that the only way for my Father now to act was entirely to connive at it, which he believed was his intention. There our meeting ended and nothing more has passed since except an intimation that something would be proposed to me soon, as there was something in agitation which was not as yet brought to perfection but that it was nothing that could hurt my feelings by wishing me to sacrifice an amiable Woman to whom I was so sincerely

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attached, and which they knew I should refuse. My information tells me it is quite of another kind and which I must explain to you for many good reasons.

Were I to marry a Woman of any other nation but a German, such as a Princess of France or Spain, had I any children by such a marriage, they would not after my decease succeed to the German Dominions. They could not at any time hereafter inherit them unless their Mother was a German. Now then, my Brother (who I begin by saying is the best Friend I have in the world, and to whom I am more attached than to anything else upon the face of the earth, excepting yourself) has always been my Father's favourite, and always has been treated as such (though that never made the least alteration in my Brother's conduct to me) I understand that it is my Father's wish to marry him to the King of Prussia's great-niece, a daughter of the Hereditary Prince of Prussia, or of Prince Ferdinand of Prussia's who are both the King's nephews, I do not know exactly to which of the two she is daughter, and that the proposal he intends to make to me is this, that as my children, if I have any by my Marriage with You, cannot succeed after my demise to the Hanoverian territories by the German Law, that if I will consent to give up my succession, I mean by that all right in my person should I survive him, to the Hanoverian Dominions and transfer it to my Brother at his death in order to make him *un meilleur Parti*, that he will then in that case be ready to do anything I choose respecting you, such as either acknowledging you as my Wife or anything else I may please. This my private authority tells me to be the case. I may be mistaken but I do not think it likely, and should that be the case, I shall instantly subscribe to those terms, after having that is to say proper assurances respecting You, for there is no sacrifice, *my beloved Wife*, that I have not, and will not make for Thee. Thou art a treasure to me, I never can part with, and I never can go too far to testify that Love which never can end but with my

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Life. Such are the principal events that have passed as yet. I must now proceed to tell you how I have conducted myself since, what has passed in an interview I have had with your Uncle. I wrote to him instantly to come to me upon receiving the Papers from Holland. However upon all these other affairs happening I sent him another Letter much more pressing desiring to see him immediately, and we agreed to meet halfway upon the road between Red Rice and London. The moment I saw him I put the papers respecting Holland into his hands, and when he had read them, I then told him everything I related to you, and insisted upon it he should name it to nobody but to your Mother. I then explained to him that from the inquiries I had made, to be sure we might be married two years hence in Holland when I am 25 Years of Age, but then your situation would be just the same here or there as if married in England, that therefore a marriage in England witnessed and attested in the manner I will inform you of presently, was much more to be wished, than a marriage abroad, that situated as I was, and as your situation in either case whether married in Holland or England was exactly the same, we did not conceive that would make any difference to one of your sense and feeling, and that considering what had passed between us now upwards of eighteen months ago, and the consent you had so lately given, which caused me with reason to give the answer I have done, and the manner in which that answer was taken, and the idea they have taken that we are perfectly married, which in reality we certainly are, that there was but one thing for us now to do, and that was to be married as soon as possible and that can only be done by your immediate return to this country, in which there would appear nothing particular as you have already declared your firm intention of so doing, and I believe it was in your last letter to your mother, but not only in that letter but in several others, in short the only thing for you to do is to set out for England almost the very next moment after you



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receive this express, and to be married the very night of your arrival, and not to say a word either of the day of your return or of our marriage, to your family till it is over as you will then be received by them all with open arms, this was your uncle's advice to me as man to man, to send the enclosed plan to you instantly by express and to make you follow it back to England as fast as possible, as the thing must now absolutely be done, the sooner it was done under the present circumstances the better, as your family are acquainted with the consent you have given they would not be offended when they knew it was over, but rather be pleased with you for the delicacy of your not acquainting them with it till we were bound in due form to each other, in order that they might have it to say if ever they were called upon, that they knew such a thing was in agitation but they were not informed of its having taken place until after everything was over. All this passed in conversation with your Uncle and a great deal more, which I cannot trust my memory with. However I supped last night with your friend Lady Anne [Barnard] with whom I had already talked a great deal respecting you, and find she knew everything respecting our situation I made no scruple of talking over our affairs very freely with her. It has been the whole delight of my life for above these three weeks last past, as she has been with her sister almost every day during that time at my house in order to meet the Duke and Duchess of Cumberland, and we have by that means had constant opportunities of talking the subject over with each other. I related to her most circumstantially everything that is included in this Letter as well what was relative to the Proposals, as to what passed in conversation between Your Uncle and me, and in short everything I have gone through upon your account, and then asked her her opinion what she thought you would do. Do, says she! she has nothing else to do but to act exactly as you had desired her. Were she not absolutely compelled by the urgency of both your situation and

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biased by her affection, (which she said she really believed to be very sincere) as well as what had previously passed eighteen Months before between us, as the consent you had so lately given, she said that gratitude alone (from what she knew of the generosity of your disposition) to a man, who had made every sacrifice upon earth for you and would if there had been as many more have made them all to you, would make you act in the manner, I wished.

As to the two former I said I had great reason to flatter myself, at least I hoped so, with success, and if Love were to cause success I might then, I believed, be pretty certain of it, as no man ever has Loved, and does love Woman, as I have, and do love Thee. But as to the last reason she gave for your coming, I mean gratitude for the sacrifices that I have made to you, I denied having any right to claim any, you might have it but I had no right to claim any, it was true I had made many and great sacrifices to you, at least what the world would call so, but when I felt a delight, a pleasure that I had it in my power to testify my Love and my attachment in so strong a manner, that my principles led me to act right, and I had a pleasure in so doing, and the consciousness of being right after having acted in this manner, I thought I had no right whatever to claim any merit for acting in a manner that was most agreeable to myself. I shall say very little more before I put a conclusion to this Volume for a letter I cannot call it. Well then I thought it right and honorable by you as soon as I found what was my Father's way of thinking upon this business to acquaint those of my Family that I knew to be my Friends and that I could rely upon, and that happened to be just at the moment upon the Spot, I mean the Duke and Duchess of Cumberland, with everything respecting my situation with You. They have behaved in the handsomest manner possible, and though they had settled their departure for Tuesday next and have business of the utmost consequence of their own, they have said that if it was for my happiness, they would,

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if they possibly could, postpone their journey till after the return of the courier from Paris with your answer, and that if you intend to follow very close they will endeavour to remain here in order to give a sanction by their presence to our happy though secret union. Everything will be done as private as possible, no one else besides the Duke and Duchess will be present unless it is the Duke and Duchess of Devonshire, in short everything is settled. We want nothing but your arrival.

When Hunter returns, if he brings your consent, which I will not in the least call in question, and the account what day you set out, the moment I have read it, I shall send him back to Dover immediately, to wait there, either to bring me instantly an account of your arrival and how soon I may calculate that you will arrive or else to attend upon you, whichever you please to the last Post before London and then to come forward in order to acquaint me with the approach of all the happiness I have in life. I then shall either meet you in a Hackney Chaise by myself between Rochester and London, or wait till I hear of your arrival in Park Street, to which place I shall fly upon the Wings of Love the moment I know you are come. I think I had better come into the House the back way through the Stables and the Garden, you know the way I mean. However you shall not be arrived ten Minutes before I am with you. I will not trust even to your sending. Whichever of these two plans you approve of most either of meeting you on the Road, or waiting till you are arrived, I will follow, as I must see you the moment you arrive, in order to settle where you choose to be married, as we must be married the night you come, before anything is known of your being in England, as to the method of our being married I will acquaint you with that when we meet and when we settle where we are to be married. One thing more I have to say respecting your arrival and then I will draw this Letter, tedious as it is, to a conclusion, and that is that I hope when you do come

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you will endeavour to come to London, you will contrive to come early in the evening but not till it is dark.

And now my Maria, my beloved wife, (for such you really are), represent to Yourself one moment my situation. I have made every sacrifice that was in my power to make to you. There is but one more sacrifice I could make to you and that is my life, which I certainly will do, and shall think you mean me so to do if you have again deceived me and have held out false hopes, but I do not think you capable of such conduct, such cruelty, such insensibility. Think one instant how I am situated, and that my fate is at present in your hands and I think you will hesitate. By coming you make me the happiest of men, by staying or doubting one instant you not only make me think that you are dead to feeling and to everything I have undergone for you but you mine and blast my reputation in the World and with my Friends. You stamp me with the Epithets of a Liar and a Scoundrel, which they will have a right to think me, and will think me, if you do not acknowledge I have told you the truth by your coming, though I am conscious of having acted strictly consistent with Honor and truth, they will never think that can be the case, if the woman I profess the truest and firmest love to, does not fully act up to my assertions, especially when they know that she has given her consent and by that means has declared her affections, they will immediately conclude that I have deceived them and do you think, my Maria, that were it possible for me to survive the losing you, I would consent to live in the world with the slightest imputation cast upon my Honor, no that I would not, especially under the Epithets of a Liar and a Scoundrel which are synonymous expressions, as the one never can exist without the other, which I must and should appear to be, were you now to leave me, and consider to whom I should appear such and innocently too, to my Father, my Family, and the World in general. I shall not add another syllable,

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but leave the decision of this affair to what you may think my merits are respecting you, to the sincerity of my attachment, and to my not having a wish nor a desire in life that does not centre in you, in short I trust the whole of your generosity. Come then, oh, come, dearest of Wives, best and most sacred of women, come and for ever crown with bliss, him who will through Life endeavour to convince you by his love and attention of his wishes to be the best of Husbands and who will ever remain unto the latest moments of his existence

*unalterably Thine*

November 3d 1785.

P.S. I send you a Parcel and a Letter from Lady Anne, and I send you at the same time an Eye, if you have not totally forgotten the whole countenance. I think the likeness will strike you.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Fitzherbert Papers, I.*

APPENDIX II

THE WILL OF THE PRINCE OF WALES

(JANUARY 10, 1796)

THE WILL OF MRS FITZHERBERT

(APRIL 26, 1836)

THE WILL MADE BY THE PRINCE OF WALES  
IN MRS FITZHERBERT'S FAVOUR

This is my last Will and Testament, written in my own Hand, and executed by me, signed and sealed this 10th day of January, in the year of Our Lord 1796.

GEORGE P.

(Seal) (Crown and GP)

[On the back is Mrs Fitzherbert's direction: "In case of my Death, this Packet not to be opened, upon any account whatever, but by the persons I shall appoint by my Will."]

THE WILL OF THE PRINCE OF WALES

(January 10, 1796)

To Thee oh ever merciful and Almighty God do I in these my last moments with the truest fervour and devotion and with all humility address myself to unveil my whole soul, and before my eyes are for ever closed, to speak that truth and to render that justice to others as well as to myself before my Creator as well as before the whole World, without which, when brought before Thy great Tribunal I could never expect that mercy and justice to which all Christians are taught to look forward and in which faith as a true professor of the Christian Religion I have lived and now die.

By this, my last Will and Testament, I now bequeathe, give and settle at my death all my worldly property of every description, denomination and sort, personal and other, as shall be hereafter described, *to my Maria Fitzherbert, my Wife, the wife of my heart and soul.* Although by the laws of this Country she could not avail herself publicly of that name, still such she is in the eyes of Heaven, was, is, and ever will be such in mine. And for the truth of which assertion I appeal to that Gracious God Who I have here

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invoked to witness this my last disposition of my property, together with such explanations and declarations as are necessary for me to make, to enable me to quit this Life with a *clear conscience*, and even without a sigh, except at the thoughts of *leaving Her* (and perhaps too without first receiving the blessing of her forgiveness), *who is my true and real Wife, and who is dearer to me, even millions of times dearer to me, than that life I am now going to resign.*

As much has been said in the World relative to our separation, I take it upon myself now thus to declare that *She (My Maria Fitzherbert) has been most infamously traduced; that Her person, Her Heart and her mind are, and ever have been from the first moment I knew her down to the present moment, as spotless, as unblemished, and as perfectly pure as anything can be that is human and mortal. Had it not been for the most infamous and basest of Calumnies, my too credulous and susceptible Heart, and which knew no other feeling in Life but for Her, could never have been brought, even for a single instant, to harbour a thought of separating from such Worth; nor was such a separation (O my God, as Thou well knowest!) voluntarily sought by Me. (But as entering further upon this point would involve others whom I pray Heaven to forgive, and lead to more than I am now able to write, I shall bury this part in oblivion.*

As to *Her* (I must also in justice to myself, so far say), *I am most confident that had not similar base vile and scandalous wretches calumniated Me to Her and represented me in lights, and in a manner, I here aver in the presence of my Creator I have never deserved, she never could, or would, have persevered with such an apparent cruelty and obduracy so foreign to the generous feelings of her Soul, in rejecting for so great a length of time, every explanation, every submission, every step my tortured Heart frequently tried, and was most ready and anxious, to make, and which finally drove me to despair.*

I now therefore, George Augustus Frederick, Prince of Wales, Duke of Cornwall etc etc etc do by



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this my Last Will and Testament leave, will and bequeathe after my death, all my Estates, all my property, all my personalities of whatever kind or sort to my *Maria Fitzherbert*, who is my Wife in the eyes of God, and who is, and ever will be, such in mine.

I leave, will and bequeathe unto Her all such monies as may be in my Banker's hands, or may be due unto Me. As also the House and Estate, and Appurtencies thereunto belonging bought by me of Field-Marshal Conway, as well as all the other Grounds and Houses, that I have bought in Pall Mall, or in the neighbourhood of Carlton House, and on a Piece of which ground part of the circular Room in Carlton House is built, and which being my property unconnected with Carlton House must consequently, if that Room is wished to be retained as part of Carlton House be bought of my *Maria Fitzherbert* at whatsoever price she may be pleased to fix upon it. I likewise will and bequeathe and leave to Her, the whole of the Furniture of Carlton House, as it is all bought with my own Money together with all the Bronze ornamented chimney pieces, all the Hangings, Chairs, Tables ornamented and inlaid Tables, bronzed Tables, Cabinets and Consoles, girandoles, Clocks whether of Bronze or of other Material, all my fine pier Glasses, glasses of every sort and denomination whatever, all my Lustres whether of Bronze Glass or whatever they may be constructed of, all my Plate of every description or sort, all my Branches that carry lights or that are made either for use or ornament, all my China or earthenware of every description, all my Wine and Liqueurs in all my Cellars, all my Books, plans, Maps, Prints, Drawings, all my Jewels, all my Rings, Trinkets, Watches, Boxes all the Furniture, goods and property I may have, or be found to have in all my Houses in the Country. Such Ground or Grounds as I have purchased or as have been granted to me in or about the Pavilion at Brighthelmstone, or at Brighthelmstone itself, as well as such property and furniture as I may have in the said Pavilion, or in the next House to it, all my Horses and Carriages, in

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short every article of property that is mine, or may be found out even hereafter to belong to me or that I am entitled to, or that has belonged to me and which I may have forgotten to mention here, and all this do I once more repeat, I do by this my last Will and Testament, will bequeathe and leave to my Maria Fitzherbert my beloved and adored Wife. There being an immense Sum of money due to me from the Crown and from the Nation on the Arrears of the Duchy of Cornwall which has remained unpaid to me, ever since the Hour of my Birth till my coming of age, and for interest due on such sums of money from the time of my coming of age that is to say from the day I attained the age of one and twenty Years to the present moment I do will and bequeathe that such a part of such sums which must be refunded as my due to my Executors, shall be employed in liquidation of the remaining part of my debts, and that whatever may remain beyond that, after upon fair and ample investigation all just debts have been liquidated, I also will bequeathe and leave to my Maria Fitzherbert as well as everything and the whole of everything I have mentioned in this Paper, which is my free and last Will and Testament.

Having now I trust made all the retribution that is in my power to *this most excellent Woman*, there only remains for me to hope that when she is made acquainted with this entire and free disposition of my Property to Her, of this my candid avowal and of the *just tribute I have paid to her merit*, she will no longer withhold her forgiveness from me, accompanying it with *her blessing*, assuring her as I now do and calling God to witness at the same time that I shall die blessing her, *my only true and real Wife*, with my parting breath, and praying the Almighty and All Merciful Being, to whom in this Paper I have opened the innermost recesses of my Heart and of my Soul, to bless, protect, and guard her through this life, looking forward with confidence to the blessed moment when our Souls in a better world may again be united, never again to part.

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Having now fulfilled my first duty to *the beloved and adored Wife of my Heart and Soul* I next turn myself to my dear Parents and I ask their forgiveness for any faults I may have ignorantly and unguardedly been guilty of towards them, assuring them that if there have been such, I trust that they will ascribe Them to the errors of Judgment and of Youth and not to any intentional error of my Heart. My Blessings and Prayers attend them as well as my much loved Brothers and Sisters to whom in my conscience I believe I have ever proved myself a good and affectionate Brother but if in any moment, and which now in no way occurs to me, I have been at all erring towards them in any respect, I must trust and hope that they will accept of my contrition, and grant me their forgiveness upon the same grounds that I have asked and hope to receive that of my beloved Parents.

As to my daughter who is just born I bequeathe the whole and sole management and care of her to the King my Father whilst he lives, and whenever it shall please Providence to call Him from hence, to the Queen my dearest and most excellent mother, admitting of Her (should she so wish it) adjoining to herself in this trust, my Sisters Augusta and Mary, my Brothers, the Duke of Clarence, Edward and Ernest or such of them here mentioned as she may please, but whenever the Hour is come when Her virtues are to receive their due and just reward in a better World, then I appoint my said Brothers, William Duke of Clarence, Edward, and Ernest, and my Sisters the Princesses Augusta Sophia, and Mary to have the Sole care of the person and education of my infant daughter, till such time as she shall have obtained the Years of discretion namely the age of one and twenty years, and then for Her to be Mistress of Herself, and such trust then to be dissolved. This I have been so far induced to be explicit upon, meaning that the Mother of the Child, called the Princess of Wales, should in *no way either be concerned in the education or care of the Child, or have possession of her Person*, for though I forgive Her the falsehood and treachery

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of her conduct towards me, *still the convincing and repeated proofs I have received of her entire want of judgment and of feeling, make me deem it incumbent upon me and a duty, both as a Parent and a Man to prevent by all means possible, the Child's falling into such improper and bad Hands as Hers.*

The first I shall mention is Miss Pigot, who has been so uniformly kind and attentive in her conduct both to my *Maria Fitzherbert* as well as to me that it is quite impossible that we must not both of us feel most tenderly for her and I consequently did all that was in my power whilst I enjoyed life for her, by settling five hundred pounds annually on her during the natural course of my Life. I therefore do not doubt that my *Maria Fitzherbert* out of such Money as will come to Her from the Duchy of Cornwall after the liquidation of my remaining debts will try to make her easy and comfortable, unless she should first, through the interest of my Family, who are all acquainted with Miss Pigot, and with my regard for Her, procure Her a comfortable maintenance for the rest of her life as one of the Housekeepers in one of the Royal Palaces and which will place her in a respectable and easy independence for the rest of her days.

My friend, the Earl of Moira, who I have ever most affectionately loved, will I trust not object, as the last testimony of his tried and long experienced regard, to the being my Executor, and to the seeing this my Will most *scrupulously adhered* to and that he together with Payne will guard and protect during their lives for the sake of their departed Friend *my beloved and adored Maria Fitzherbert, my Wife, in short my Second Self.*

Having nothing to leave, but what I have already bequeathed to my *Maria Fitzherbert*, all I can do is, in general to recommend to the King's gracious protection as well as to my daughter when she becomes of a sufficient age, and in the mean time to my Brothers these Domestic who have been in the Habits of constant attendance upon my person, hoping that when I am gone that they will not let them starve,

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but amongst them all, I must particularly recommend my old and faithful Servant Santague, who from the time I was nine Years of age has attended me with a Parent's care and solicitude and who never has deserved a Rebuke, he is now very far advanced in Years and all I hope is, that his latter years may be rendered as comfortable in point of income and of his circumstances as they were when he was in my service.

I desire I may be buried with as little pomp as possible, and that *my constant companion, the Picture of my beloved wife, my Maria Fitzherbert*, may be interred with me, suspended round my neck by a Ribbon as I used to wear it when I lived, *and placed right upon my Heart*. I likewise wish and desire and entreat of *my adored Maria Fitzherbert* to permit that, whenever she quits this life and is interred, my coffin should be taken up and placed next to Hers, wherever she is to be buried, and, if she has no objection, that the two inward sides of the two Coffins should be taken out, and the two Coffins then to be soldered together, as the late King's and Queen's were. It is therefore I wish to be buried *not* in my Family Vault, but *anywhere*, as privately as possible, in order that my Ashes may repose in quiet, *until they are placed next to hers or united with hers*.

Having thus closed the Scene of a life *most full of trouble and misery*, I have only now to bid a last farewell to *Her who whilst She and I were One did constitute the sole and only Happiness of that Life I am now going to resign*. None have I enjoyed since we separated, and none could I ever expect under any circumstances whatever, unless we were once more to be united again. To *Her* therefore my *Maria, my Wife, my Life, my Soul* do I bid my last adieu.

Round thee shall my soul for ever hover thy guardian angel, for as I never ceased to adore Thee whilst living so shall I ever be watchful over Thee and protect Thee against every evil. Farewell, dearest Angel, if I must quit Thee and the whole World in Thee by the decrees of Almighty Providence, be it so and the Will of Heaven be obeyed, but think of Thy

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departed Husband, shed a tear on his memory and his grave and now recollect that no Woman ever yet was so loved and adored by Man as you were and are by Him

(LS) turn over

In looking over the foregoing sheets I perceive I have omitted a circumstance of the utmost importance to my peace and quiet. And that is, that in the beginning of the last Year or quite at the end of the preceding Year, in consequence of an application from me to the King, through Lord Loughborough, that his Majesty would be so gracious (in case of my death before *my Maria Fitzherbert*) as to be pleased to continue to her for her Life the settlement I had for some years, before, made upon Her of three thousand pounds annually during the natural term of my Life, The Chancellor by the gracious command of the King wrote to me, in consequence, that his Majesty did not think such an event likely to happen, but in the case that it should be so that He would be answerable for it; which claims my warmest acknowledgments, nor am I acquainted with language sufficiently energetick to express half what I feel to the King for this instance of his paternal and gracious goodness and consideration, if I did I should endeavour to express, though faintly, the gratitude of my Heart. My mind therefore is quite at rest upon this circumstance, as I place the fullest and most ample reliance and faith in this, the King's most kind and gracious promise. Lord Loughborough's own letter (of which I received a copy written in Miss Pigot's Hand, and which will be found amongst my Papers) I gave to Miss Pigot to deliver to *my Maria Fitzherbert*, which I entertain not the slightest doubt but she did, in which event it is in *the possession of my Maria Fitzherbert*. But supposing that she may not have done so, or that it may not have been in her power to do so, then it must *be in hers*. This was a circumstance which had escaped my memory, and was of such serious import, and of so essential a nature to my feelings, that I should have

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deemed myself guilty of the most unpardonable and scandalous neglect, if, upon the revision of all I have here written, I had omitted it, especially as it tells so much for the honour, and is for the interest of all parties as well as speaks what I owe in gratitude (and which I trust my Heart has never in any instance been deficient in) to the King as my Father.

(LS)                      GEORGE P.

*Liberavi animam meam.* God in his Mercy receive my Soul.

Carlton House    January 12, 1796.    (LS)

The whole of this Paper is written, signed and sealed by my own Hand, so help me God.

(LS)                      GEORGE P.

The Prince some years later enclosed his Will with the following letter which Mrs Fitzherbert cherished among her papers. She rejoined him the next month.

(December 11, 1799):

Your note, my precious Life, my Maria, I have just received and am delighted if it has been fortunately through my means that you may find an Hour or two's amusement. I assure you that I had not begun the work, nor thought of it, as I am just at present in another course of reading and which will take up a good deal of my time for some days to come. As to the Paper I have put into your hands, it was with no view of distressing your feelings that I entrusted it to you; that I wished you to be acquainted with the contents I most certainly did, and next to the relief I felt when I had finished it, and which certainly did restore me in a manner to life, after a precarious and dangerous illness, the greatest relief to my Heart would be the knowing that you had perused it. As there are parts not relative to yourself which are material for you to know, and which it was so difficult next to impossibility for [me] to explain in conversation, and which only method I knew of was after a long hesitation and contest with myself to lay that before

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you which could convince you that upon these subjects whoever talks to me speaks perfectly in the dark. That cannot be the case when you have looked over the Paper, but certainly these parts. Jack Payne, who has today looked over one of the other Copies and is perfectly master of them may if you please leaving out such parts as regard you point then out what I mean and I shall tell him so before he calls upon you in the morning. Think not my Angel, that there is *one unkind expression even about you* contained in the whole of it; no, believe me, nothing could be further both from the Writer's Heart and mind, both then and now (though it is now within a few days of four years since it was written) and indeed at all times, than a thought of that nature. How I have loved and adored you God only knows and how I do *now* He also knows and you even cannot pretend to be ignorant of or to disbelieve. I have no secrets from you nor ever will have whilst I exist. No one has ever seen it but Payne and not two others in the World know that it exists but never have seen it. When I said no one but Payne I forgot but as you already know it, it is almost needless for me to repeat it, that my Sister has seen it but excepting her and Payne no one on my sacred Honor has seen it. There is nothing in it, my Maria, to hurt your feelings. You will only know me better than ever you did, and why you should wish to remain in ignorance whilst I live of what you and the whole world must be acquainted with when I am no more. It will be an unspeakable relief, I repeat to my Heart. I am ready to receive it again when you assure me you have looked it over, and I am sure you will not refuse me when I tell you that it is most essential to my peace of mind. As to my Sister<sup>1</sup> I forgot I suppose to tell you that she expected no answer and indeed rather seemed to wish none, for she meant merely to convey her opinions as she told me and good wishes to you and had but one motive to dictate what she wrote, her sense of what was right for us both, and consequently the thorough establishment of our united and mutual

<sup>1</sup> The Princess Royal, later Queen of Württemberg.



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happiness. Pray, dearest Life, let me see you soon again, and it will be with most true and heart-felt delight that I shall meet you, if I know that by having looked that Paper over you are perfectly acquainted with every feature of the Heart and Soul of

Your own own own GEORGE P

PS My cold is something better. I was not out of my room the whole morning but have been at the Play with Treves this evening from whence I am just returned.

Pray, pray, I conjure of you, let me hear of you tomorrow that you are *well* and not in *the dismals*. Only think of my being obliged to preach to you, my beloved and adored Maria. God bless you, my only Life and Love. I will not positively intrude any longer upon you.<sup>1</sup>

### THE WILL OF MRS FITZHERBERT

This is the Last Will and Testament of me Maria Fitzherbert of Tilney St in the County of Middlesex. I give all my plate and plated articles, trinkets and personal ornaments to the Honourable Mary Georgina Emma Dawson Damer, wife of the Honorable Colonel George Lionel Dawson Damer, and to my niecc, the wife of the Honorable Edward Stafford Jerningham, equally to be divided between them for their respective separateness.

I give all the residue of my personal estate whatsoever, after payment of my debts, funeral and testamentary expenses and such legacies and annuities as I may bequeath by any codicil to this my will, to Mrs Damer's brother Sir George Seymour, a Captain in the Royal Navy, James Weld of Lulworth Castle in the County of Dorset Esquire, Lieutenant-Colonel Gurwood, and Samuel Forster of Lincoln's Inn, Gentleman their executors, administrators and assigns: In trust to get in and sell the same, and to stand possessed of the same, and the produce thereof, on the trust hereinafter mentioned, that is to say: In trust to invest the same

<sup>1</sup> *Fitzherbert Papers*, I.

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in government or real securities at interest, with power from time to time to vary the said fund, but during the lives of Colonel and Mrs Damer and the life of the survivor of them with their, his or her consent to be signified in writing, and to stand possessed of such funds and securities: In trust to pay the income thereof to the said Mary Georgina Emma Dawson Damer during her life for her separate use, and so the same shall not be subject to the debts or control of her husband, and that she shall not be at liberty to anticipate such income. And after her decease: In trust to pay the income of the same fund to the said George Lionel Dawson Damer during his life and after the decease of the survivor of them the said trust shall be: In trust for all or such one or more of the children of the said Mary Georgina Emma Dawson Damer, at such ages and times and in such shares and manner and with such provisions for maintenance during minority and for advancement in the world as the said Mary Georgina Emma Dawson Damer shall by deed or will, executed in the presence of two or more witnesses, appoint. And in default of such appointment: In trust for all the children of the said Mary Georgina Emma Dawson Damer, who being sons, shall attain the age of twenty-one years, or being daughters shall attain that age or marry, equally to be divided between them if more than one, and if there shall be but one such child then: In trust for such one child and if there shall be no such child: In trust for the said Mary Georgina Emma Dawson Damer, her Executors, administrators and assigns. And I hereby declare that no child of the said Mary Georgina Emma Dawson Damer taking any part of the said trust fund under any appointment to be made by her shall be entitled to any share of the unappointed part of the same fund without bringing his or her appointed share into hotchpot. And I hereby declare that after the decease of the survivor of them the said George Lionel Dawson Damer and Mary Georgina Emma Dawson Damer it shall be lawful for the said trustees or trustee to apply the whole or any part of the expectant share of any child in the said trust fund

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towards his or her advancement and to apply the whole or any part of the income of such share in or towards his or her maintenance or education. And in case any of the trustees hereby appointed or who shall be appointed as hereinafter mentioned, shall die or resign or decline to act in or wish to be discharged from, the trust hereby respectively reposed in them, I empower the said Mary Georgina Emma Dawson Damer and after her death the said George Lionel Dawson Damer and after their deaths the surviving or continuing trustees or trustee of the same fund, and if there shall be no such trustee then the executors or administrators of the last surviving trustee, by deed to appoint new trustees when necessary in the usual manner, who shall have all the same powers as the trustees had in whose room they shall be appointed. And I declare that the trustees for the time being shall be only responsible for their own acts and defaults and shall have power to reimburse themselves their costs and expences. And I appoint the said George Seymour, James Weld, John Gurwood and Samuel Forster *executors* of this my will. And I desire that no hatchment may be affixed to either of my houses. In *witness* thereof I have to this my last will and testament contained in three sheets of paper set my hand and seal, that is to say to the two preceding sheets subscribed my name and affixed my seal, this 25th day of March in the year of our Lord 1836

MARIA FITZHERBERT

(Witnessed by S. Cholmeley and Bartle J. L. Frere)

London (March 28, 1836)

I, Maria Fitzherbert, do make and declare this paper writing a *codicil* to my last will and testament and to be considered as such: To my dear sister-in-law Mrs Wat Smythe one thousand pounds legacy. To my two nieces Lady Bathurst and Mrs Craven one thousand pounds each. I have ever felt for them both as great an interest and very sincere affection and had in a former will left them considerable legacies. Since that period they have both been greatly provided for, and

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do not stand in need of any assistance from me. I beg my kind friends Sir George Seymour and Frederick Seymour to accept five hundred pounds each of them as a small token of remembrance having always had a sincere regard and affection for them.

Annuities for life. 200£ to my friend Miss Lucia Jeffreys  
200£ to William Dawson R.N.

100£ to Henry Daykin.

To Mrs Viney, Mrs Mills and Mrs Townshend each 30£ per ann. Mrs Street 24£. To Thos Fisher 80£ per ann. Henry Daykin 100£, Mrs Street 50£, Mrs Viney, Mrs Mills, Mrs Townshend £300 each legacy. To Richard Bassett 400£ legacy. I desire that the annuities and legacies bequeathed to all my servants may be paid free of all taxes and I request my executors to pay such duties out of the residue of my personal estate. I leave to the Hon George D. Damer 300£ legacy and 30£ annuity for life to Mrs Hazlehurst, in trust to the above George D. Damer, for her own private use, totally independent of her husband. I desire my servants may have mourning and one month's board wages. The above codicil written in my own handwriting and signed by me in the presence of

(Witnessed by the Earl of Munster and Surgeon Harry Blaker)

MARIA FITZHERBERT

Brighton (April 26, 1836)

### CODICIL TO MRS FITZHERBERT'S WILL

Maryanne Jerningham and Minney Damer!

The Paper is addressed to my two dear children who I am sure will strictly comply with a few requests I wish to make: Life is uncertain and my health and speech are often so much distressed that I am fit for nothing. Still my anxiety is great respecting them. I pray to God they may both live long with sincere affection and attachment to each other. I am confident this will be the case, the thought reconciles my mind at taking a long farewell of them. I have loved them both with the tenderest affection any Mother could do and I have done to the utmost of my power for their

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interests and comfort. God bless them both as well as all those that belong to them.

I beg my dear George Damer to accept of the two large Pictures of Gainsborough in my dining room as a small remembrance of me.

To dear Minney a round Sevres table and to Maryanne a small Commode inlaid Sevres which generally stands in one of the drawing rooms.

A Picture of Admiral Payne's, I desire may be sent to Capt Mason at Lord Hood's.

I have packed up trinkets in separate boxes at the Bankers which Mr Forster will deliver to you and have written upon some of them directions how they are to be disposed of.

The Picture of the late King George the Fourth by Madame Le Brune belongs to Minney Damer. I gave it her a long time ago.<sup>1</sup>

### VALUATION OF THE LATE MRS FITZHERBERT'S HOUSE, OLD STEYNE, BRIGHTON

The Furniture and Fixtures	1726	9	6
China and Glass	48	8	0
Ornamental articles	70	1	0
Books	25	7	0
Wines	37	11	0
Linen	71	5	0
Plate	1521	1	0
Plated Articles	38	11	0
	<hr/>		
	3538	13	6

### THE SAME, TILNEY STREET

Furniture and Fixtures	1351	8	0
Sevres China, Bronzes and Clocks	254	15	0
Books	45	5	0
Paintings, Drawings and Prints	115	7	0
Wine	17	5	0
Carriage	105	0	0
	<hr/>		
	1889	0	0

<sup>1</sup> *Fitzherbert Papers*, III.

### APPENDIX III

#### MRS FITZHERBERT'S ADOPTED DAUGHTERS

CONSIDERABLE curiosity was always roused by the presence of two adopted daughters in Mrs Fitzherbert's household; Mary Georgiana Seymour and Mary Anne Smythe. The first of these was the Minney, over whom the Seymour Case was waged. To these two ladies Mrs Fitzherbert was a mother indeed and they certainly knew no other. They lived under her roof and protection until their marriages, and when she died she divided her jewellery between them. Both of them married younger sons, but in time became the mothers of Peers of the Realm.

It has been frankly supposed that neither was what she was represented to be in the Peerage, and that both could claim Royal Blood. Officially Minney was the youngest daughter of Lord and Lady Hugh Seymour, while Mary Anne Smythe was said to be niece of Mrs Fitzherbert and daughter of her brother, Jack Smythe, who had figured as a witness at her wedding with the Prince.

Minney was freely supposed to be a daughter of the Prince, and she gives an amusing account of her reception in Germany and the interest which was caused by her supposed likeness to the Princess Charlotte.

This supposition has always been indignantly denied in the Seymour family, whose boast was that, though they supplied Queens to the Throne of England, they never provided mistresses. There can be little doubt that the Lady Hertford who Queened the Regency was

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respectable. Her deportment could have been described in three words as Platonic, plump, and Protestant. Lady Hugh Seymour was not only a devoted wife, but a dear friend of Mrs Fitzherbert of whose secret connection with the Prince she was well aware. The only reason for supposing Minney to be the Prince's daughter was the extraordinary conduct of the Prince himself, which has been sufficiently described in this work.

Not until recently has Royal Blood been claimed by serious historians for Minney. Mr Aspinall in his magnificent edition of the *Letters of George IV* (issued by the Cambridge Press in 1938) states in a footnote that she was

*"the Prince Regent's daughter by Lady Horatia Seymour the wife of Lord Hugh Seymour, Lord Hertford's brother. . . . Lady Horatia's friend Mrs Fitzherbert had taken charge of Mary during her mother's last illness and wished to adopt her. The executors, ignorant of the child's parentage, would not consent to such an arrangement. . . ."*

Professor Charles Webster states in his masterly Introduction to the same volumes that

*"the refusal of George IV to recognise the marriage to Mrs Fitzherbert is stated once more in Knighton's Diary with some curious reflections that are not very convincing, but otherwise she only appears in connection with the Prince's daughter, Minney Seymour, a tie that still connected them when all others had been severed."*

Mr Aspinall has kindly written a letter substantiating his views which is added with his permission:

*"I certainly have no proof of his paternity [George IV] but I consider when all the facts are taken into account the really extraordinary efforts which he made*

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to prevent the child being taken out of Mrs Fitzherbert's hands, the fortune he bestowed on her (nearly £20,000), Lady Horatia's desire that this child of hers should be placed under the Prince's guardianship, the strong interest in her which he retained as late as 1825, long after he had finally broken off his connection with Mrs Fitzherbert, the way in which she addressed him in 1825 and the terms of his letter to the Duke of York (*Letters of George IV 1202-3*), the conclusion is inescapable.

"George IV's generosity towards Minney was typical of his treatment of all his offspring, for whom he provided either by pension or settlement, apart from the considerable sums spent on their upbringing. He gave instructions to Lord Eldon, whom he consulted about his Will in 1823, to include a legacy of £30,000 to one of his sons."

Such an assumption would throw a strange and new light on the character of Mrs Fitzherbert. Whatever are the historical reasons in its favour, all family tradition runs contrary. It is true that the correspondence between Minney, and her "Prinney" reads like that of a father and his secret daughter. The thought was Father to the girl. His stubborn action on her behalf during the Seymour Case and the magnificent dowry he set aside for her marriage all pointed to the paternal feeling. Certainly he had persuaded his own sanguine nature that he was her father. That royal nature could believe itself, as Voltaire said of the prophet Habakkuk, *capable de tout*. He believed that in youth he had vanquished a butcher with fisticuffs and later Napoleon at the Battle of Waterloo.

Mrs Fitzherbert and her Prince both loved Minney with passionate affection and no doubt, when all else between them had passed into dust and ashes, Minney was still the key to their hearts. But would it have been possible for Mrs Fitzherbert to have adopted and loved the child of her husband by another woman? If that



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was the case, she was even more remarkable than ever supposed.

And then who was Mary Anne Smythe, the gentle lovely creature in the background, who appeared in Mrs Fitzherbert's life during the years that Minney was growing up and threatening to leave Mrs Fitzherbert desolate? She bore Mrs Fitzherbert's maiden name and was always classified as a niece. Mrs Fitzherbert was chaperon to both girls at the same time. Her calling card was printed with the name of "Miss Seymour" after her own. That of "Miss Marianne Smythe" was added in ink. Two specimens survive: one at Swynnerton preserving both names, but the other belonging to the Dawson-Damers has Miss Smythe's name carefully erased.

While the Seymours were always indignant at any suggestion of Minney's Royal parentage, they seem to have had little doubt about Maryanne's. They considered her the daughter of Mrs Fitzherbert. For instance, Minney's brother Frederick wrote to her from Geneva (February 1, 1824):

"I have not heard any accounts of you for a length of time but perceive by a Pavilion Concert list that you are in Brighton and that you there appeared among the Nobility, thanks to be rendered I suppose for such an honour to the most gracious lady who has always been so active in promoting your interests with the Sovereign, even to the prejudice of *her own daughter* for which I trust she may live to be rewarded. . . . I wish my dear Minney, some fortunate decision as to your Summer plans could possibly make you pass the next one here. It is a scheme I recollect Mrs Fitzherbert once wished very much."<sup>1</sup>

The Fitzherbert Family had no objection to Maryanne appearing as Mrs Fitzherbert's niece. The compiler of the Swynnerton Deed Book makes a careful record

<sup>1</sup> *Portarlington Papers.*



MARIANN SMYTHILL

From a portrait in Lord Stafford's collection



### Appendix III

of Mrs Fitzherbert in the family annals and adds (November, 1827):

“ I saw her last night at a Ball at Brighton which she patronised looking extremely well though aged 71. She was accompanied by Miss Smythe, the only daughter of her late brother John Smythe.”

Maryanne was educated like Mrs Fitzherbert by the Blue Nuns in Paris, of whom much is to be gleaned from the Jerningham Papers, but there is no trace of her birth or exact age. By 1812 she was living with Mrs Fitzherbert at Brighton, with whom she remained until her marriage to the Hon. Edward Jerningham (henceforth to be referred to in Mrs Fitzherbert's letters as “ the Jams ”). In 1815 the Duke of Clarence presented her with an inlaid work box which is now at Swynnerton. The attribution of her paternity to John Smythe appeared in the Peerage of 1839 two years after Mrs Fitzherbert's death:

“ Edward Jerningham married Marianne daughter of the late John Smythe and niece of Mrs Fitzherbert.”

The late Mrs Langdale left a record that John Smythe died before Maryanne was born. Maryanne's picture at Swynnerton has a note written in the handwriting of her son-in-law mentioning her as “ adopted daughter of John Smythe.” It was possible that she could have been the posthumous daughter, but family tradition insists that the Widow Strickland, who was the wife of John Smythe, was barren, and descended to her grave without ever reading in the Peerage of her interesting issue.

The date of the death of her supposed mother was recorded in a letter which Mrs Fitzherbert wrote to Minney Seymour from Brighton in November 1831:

“ Maryanne starts for Cossey tomorrow. She is quite well and I shall be glad when she is settled there.

## Appendix III

I have just had a letter from Charles Smythe to announce the death of Strickland *alias* Mrs J. Smythe."

If the Widow Strickland was the mother of Maryanne, her daughter did not find it necessary to postpone her journey to the Jerningham home in Norfolk. Grief did not afflict her nor Mrs Fitzherbert. On the fifteenth of the same month Mr and Mrs Stafford Jerningham were dining at the Brighton Pavilion (*Jerningham Letters*).

It is still impossible to find the record of her birth or age. Pictures of her at Swynnerton represent her as a young girl dated:

1814 Brighton  
1824 Brighton  
1824 Brighton (with ringlets)

Maryanne always referred to Mrs Fitzherbert maternally, as may appear from one of her few surviving letters written to Colonel Gurwood (November 1, 1830):

"Mama intended answering your letter some days ago but has been prevented doing so in consequence of inflammation in the eyes and she desires me to thank you for your epistle. We are looking forward with much anxiety to the events of tomorrow. The times are really become very alarming. Dear Minney is still as frisky as ever, out all day and as well as possible. We almost despair of the arrival of a son and heir. Our departure is fixed for the 9th. I shall be very sorry to leave dear Mama, but our hunting engagements, I fear, must not be postponed. Mary Jerningham."<sup>1</sup>

Minney and Maryanne were brought up in sisterly love together until marriage removed them in turn from under Mrs Fitzherbert's wings. They often met

<sup>1</sup> *Fitzherbert Papers, II.*

## Appendix III

again in Tilney Street, and a letter from Maryanne records such a moment :

" I trust, dearest Minney, our Correspondence will cease after today as I hope to embrace you and George with your special permission on Thursday under the dear maternal roof as you so kindly call it. I love the term. It touches me most sensibly connected as it is with early happy days and one ever beloved absent the chief promoter of them all."<sup>1</sup>

Maryanne married Edward Jerningham in 1828, and died at Versailles in 1859, when her shadowy existence for the first time broke into print. Provost Husbeth was responsible for a

" Discourse delivered at the Funeral  
of the Honourable  
Mary Stafford Jerningham  
at  
St Augustin of Englands Chapel  
Cossey Hall  
on 24th of August 1859."

As her body had required removal from the Continent, it received embalming no doubt, owing to the necessities of the case, but some would like to imagine " for she was a King's daughter." Mrs Fitzherbert wrote to her referring to Jerningham as her " son-in-law."

Some MSS Notes on the House of Stafford are preserved at Swynnerton, and make this record :

" Edward Stafford Jerningham born at Haughley August 4, 1801. He married June 16, 1828 Marianne Smythe, said to be daughter of John Smythe, great grandson of Sir John Smythe third Bart of Eshe, Co. Durham. If she was a daughter of John Smythe, she cannot have been legitimate, for John Smythe had no children by his wife, widow of Captain Strickland.

<sup>1</sup> *Fitzherbert Papers*, II.

## Appendix III

She is also and generally described as niece of Mrs Fitzherbert and treated ostensibly as her niece, but many indications point with considerable probability to the conclusion that she was a daughter of Mrs Fitzherbert by George IV."

In this case she was by the Law of England an illegal child, but by the Law of the Churches (both Anglican and Catholic) legitimate.

Edward and Maryanne Jerningham had issue :

- (1) Augustus Frederick Stafford Jerningham  
Tenth Lord Stafford.
- (2) Fitzherbert Edward. Eleventh Lord Stafford.
- (3) Emily who married Basil Thomas Fitzherbert of Swynnerton :

who had issue :

- (1) Francis Edward Fitzherbert. Twelfth Lord Stafford,  
died 1932
- (2) Basil John Fitzherbert, died 1923
- (3) Edward Stafford Joseph (Admiral and K.C.B)  
Thirteenth Lord Stafford.
- (4) Thomas Charles Fitzherbert, died 1937

George IV was particular never to acknowledge any illegitimate children. The Lady Charles Bentinck, who was inscribed in her baptismal record as his daughter by Grace Elliott, had no royal authority for her claim.

